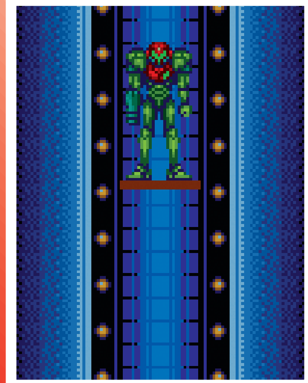
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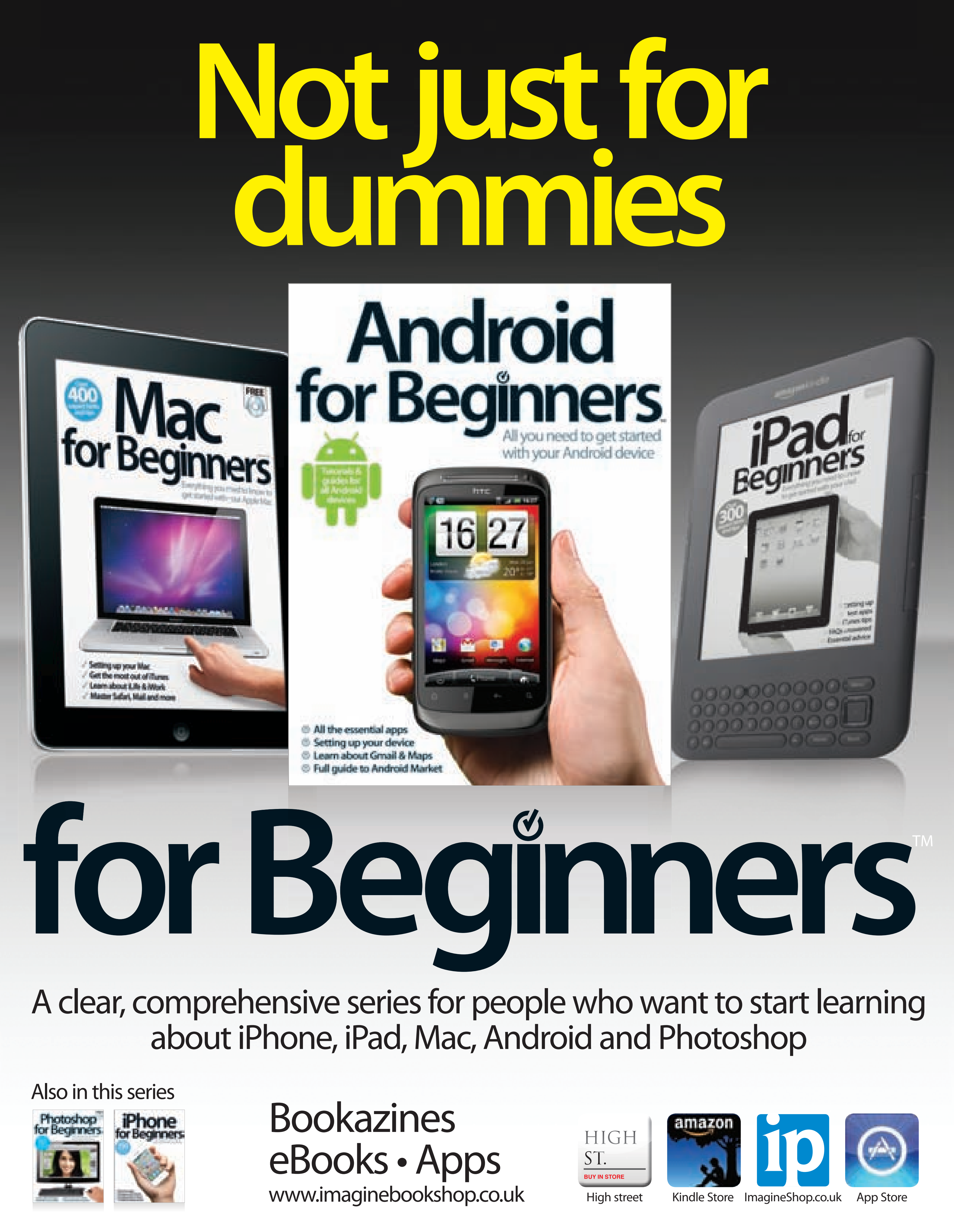


FROM 2D PLATFORMER TO 3D POWERHOUSE: THE RISE OF SAMUS ARAN

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Original Nintendo Seal of Quality

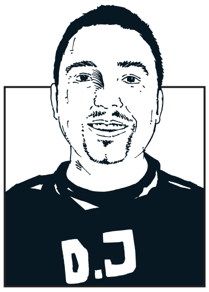
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THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE METROID GAME?



DARRAN JONES

I'm going to buck the trend here and say *Metroid: Zero Mission*. It's a great adaptation of the NES original, with a fantastic ending.

Expertise:
Juggling a wife, two children and **Retro Gamer** magazine

Currently playing:
Phantasy Star Portable

Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



STUART HUNT

It has to be *Super Metroid* as it was the first *Metroid* title I ever played. It still looks amazing today. A timeless SNES classic.

Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them

Currently playing:
Half-Life 2

Favourite game of all time:
Half-Life 2



CRAIG GRANNELL

In terms of pure fun, I'd probably go back to the original NES title, which also had one of the nicest US boxes I've ever seen.

Expertise:
Games you don't need 37 fingers to control

Currently playing:
Lots of Pinball Dreams on iPhone

Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



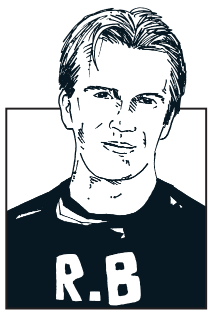
ASHLEY DAY

It's probably not cool to say this, but *Metroid Prime 3: Corruption* is my favourite. The Wii Remote controls are the best of their kind and Retro Studios finally managed to pitch the difficulty level fairly.

Expertise:
The games of Team17, MSX, Sega's *Shining Force* series

Currently playing:
The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask

Favourite game of all time:
Shining Force III



RICHARD BURTON

Super Metroid. Simply one of the best games ever for the SNES, let alone in the *Metroid* series. I'm not so sure about that Moonwalk, move however…

Expertise:
Stuff, nonsense, things and stuff

Currently playing:
Loom

Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



DAVID CROOKES

Super Metroid without a doubt – and what an experience (I love that moonwalk). One to relive on Virtual Console, that's for sure.

Expertise:
All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation

Currently playing:
Broken Sword: The Director's Cut

Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



IAIN LEE

Metroid Fusion. I took this on holiday with me to Japan last year and got sucked in. I'm rubbish at it, though, and can't get anywhere close to completing it.

Expertise:
Pretending to be American while playing on Xbox Live

Currently playing:
Halo Wars – as an American

Favourite game of all time:
Elite (the BBC Model B version)



PAUL DAVIES

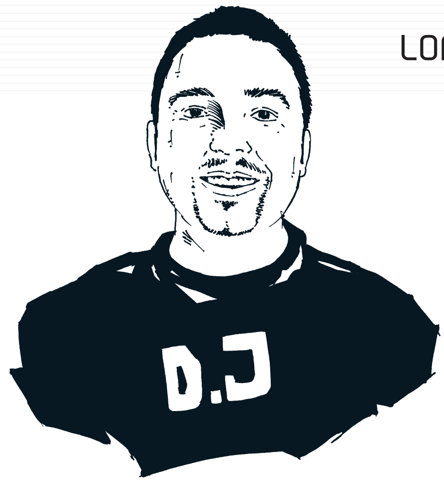
Super Metroid of course. *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* totally stole from it.

Expertise:
Banging my head against brick walls

Currently playing:
Bionic Commando (the weird new one)

Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N' Ghosts

LOADING...



The thing we're most proud of at Retro Gamer is the close relationship with our readers. With that in mind, this month we've created a brand new feature that allows you to join in and effectively play some of the greatest games of all time with us.

Every month we'll be looking at a cult classic, playing it to death and then discussing its merits afterwards. The best (read: most amusing) comments will end up in the magazine, giving you yet another way to have your voice heard. This month's game is *Castle Of Illusion*, but we're already getting down and dirty with next month's title, so be sure to join in by visiting **www.retrogamer.net/forum**.

In other exciting news, we managed to arrange an exclusive visit to Nintendo's HQ, where we were lucky enough to interview Yoshio Sakamoto, the director of *Super Metroid* – as you may have guessed thanks to our stunning front cover. And the *Metroid* mania continues with a look back at Samus Aran's entire history, from the original *Metroid* to her latest Wii outing. Don't miss it.

And don't worry if you're not a big fan of Samus, because you'll find in-depth articles on everything from Acorn's Archimedes to Atari's *Toobin* to 8-bit conversion house Elite.

Enjoy the magazine

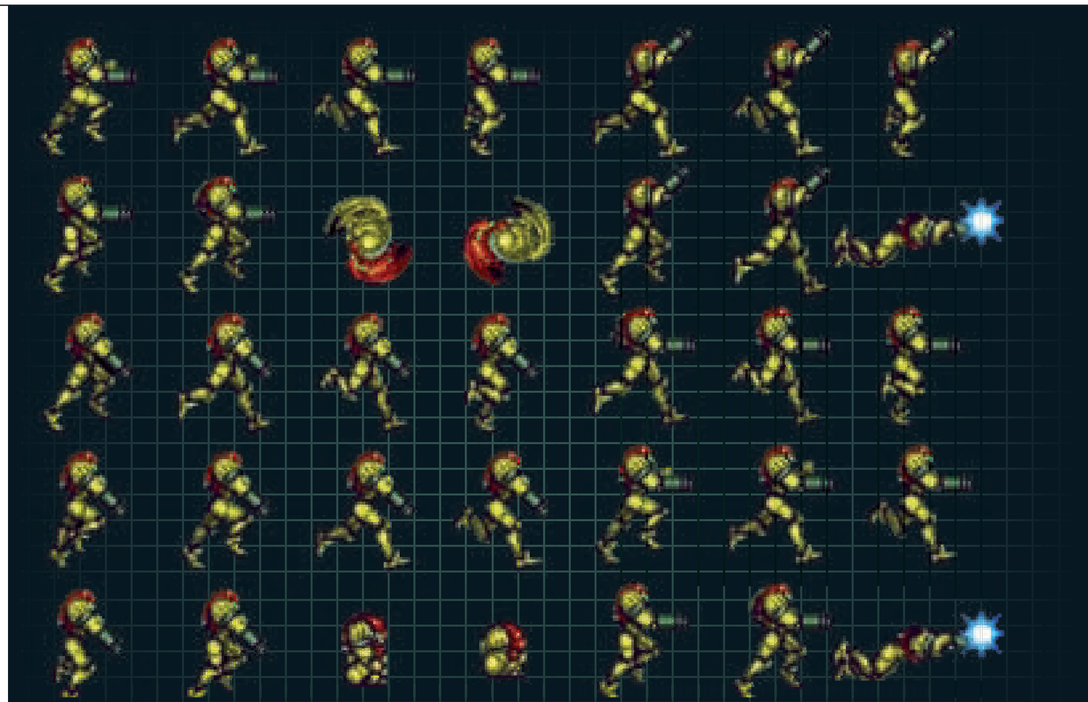




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» Load 65 Breathing new life into classic games

FEATURED

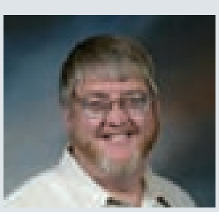


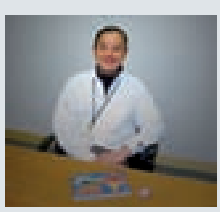
RETRO REVIVALS

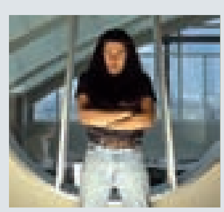




In the hotseat this month…







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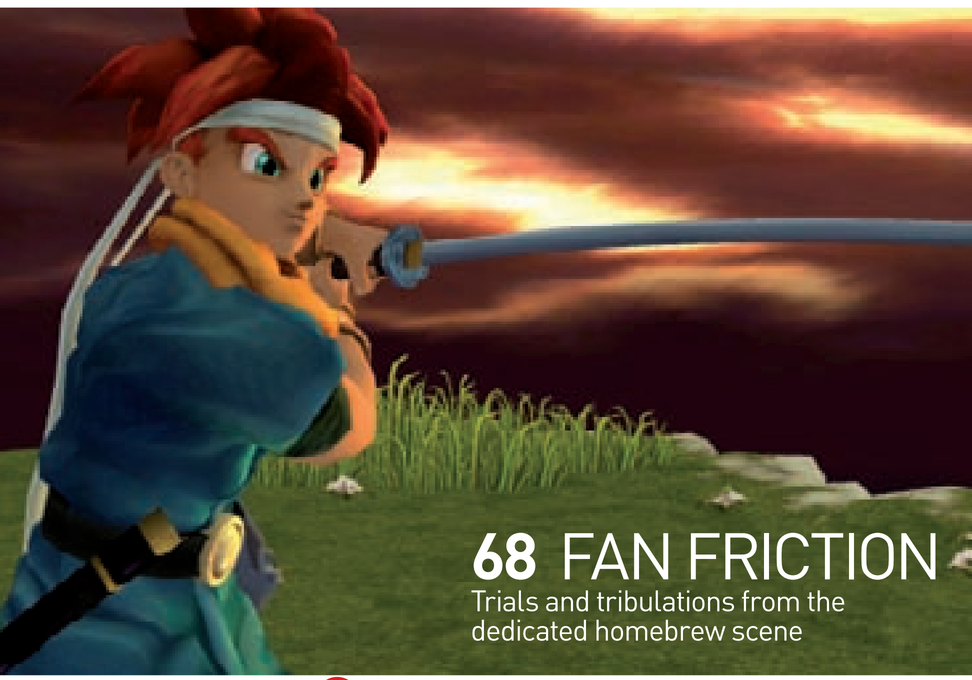
RETRO RATED

"It's inventive, fun to play and looks amazing" Sebadude



64 LET'S ALL PLAY!

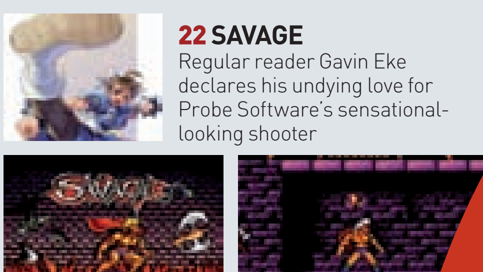
Retro Gamer readers reveal why *Castle Of Illusion* holds such a special place in their hearts



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Trials and tribulations from the dedicated homebrew scene

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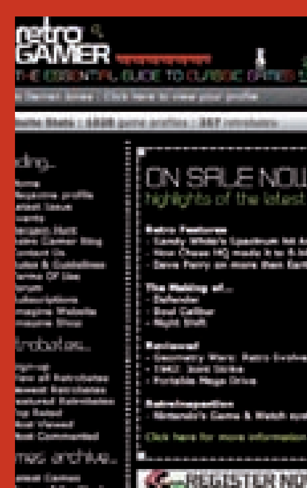


22 SAVAGE

Regular reader Gavin Eke declares his undying love for Probe Software's sensational-looking shooter

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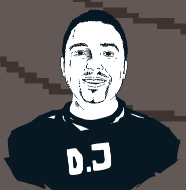
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retro radar

» GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



» It's a bittersweet Retro Radar this month as we've experienced the joy of Videogame Nation and the announcement of Marvel Vs Capcom 2, but have lost Super Turrican creator Factor 5. Hopefully Iain and Paul's great columns will cheer you up.

✱ CONTENTS

» Videogame Nation is running till 20 September and entry costs just £3 per person so there's no reason not to make the trip north.





✱ GO DEEPER

» Videogame Nation took two years to organise and is the brainchild of Retro Gamer's David Crookes.

» The exhibition pays tribute to a host of top gaming names, including Matthew Smith, Jeff Minter, Jon Hare, Peter Molyneux and Richard and David Darling.

» Watch the history of *Elite* in a fascinating documentary and the first episode of *GamesMaster* on the exhibition's cinema screen.

» Play *Sensible Soccer*, *Kick Off 2*, *FIFA International Soccer*, *Daley Thompson's Decathlon* and *Virtua Tennis*.

VIDEOGAME NATION

THE LOWDOWN ON BRITISH GAMING EXHIBITION VIDEOGAME NATION

It's 7pm on 12 May 2009 inside the shining, modern, glass building that is Urbis in Manchester. Less than 30 minutes earlier, the floor of Videogame Nation – an exhibition dedicated to British videogaming – was strewn with workmen's tools, scraps of paper and old cassette boxes. Now it's filled with eager visitors clutching glasses of champagne. After two years of preparation, it's finally game on.

Within seconds of entering, people migrate towards the games. Former Ocean graphics artist Mark R Jones bounds around showing people his work, and visitor Simon Booth, from Bury, walks around excitedly, pointing at various exhibits. "Oh, *Syndicate*, I remember that," he says dashing over to a poster. A few lads from Manchester's sci-fi and film bar Fab Cafe walk in, eyes wide with anticipation ("look at everyone smiling," says one), and before long the exhibition space is full.

Videogame Nation demonstrates gaming's evolution into one of Britain's most important industries, allowing gamers who stopped playing in the Eighties to see just how far things have come, and lets those who started to play relatively recently see how it all began. It highlights not just the games, but also the companies and the people behind them. By contextualising gaming in this way, rather than throwing machines haphazardly into a room, the exhibition seeks to tell the story about how games have matured.

> "I've never seen an exhibition that has done so much justice to British gaming"

"Wii and DS have introduced so many new people to gaming over the past few years that this is a great chance for them to see the origins of the industry and understand just how far we have come and how that has happened," says David Crookes, the exhibition's consultant curator.

There's so much to see and the nostalgia trip happens immediately with visitors introduced to a bedroom that pays homage to the classic games of the Eighties. Visitors can play *Head Over Heels*, *Jet Set Willy*, *Jetpac*, *Elite* and *Monty On The Run*. They can read biographies of key developers, and listen to Matthew Smith, Sir Clive Sinclair and Ocean's Mark R Jones on a telephone situated next to a bed adorned with a videogaming duvet. A nearby bookcase is covered with old games, joysticks and machines…

Developer opinions

» The industry reflects on the Videogame Nation exhibition



Mark R Jones

FORMER GRAPHIC DESIGNER AT OCEAN SOFTWARE

The exhibition is amazing. As soon as David [Crookes] made me aware of it, I started to dig out lots of old retro stuff relating to Ocean Software and I was only too happy to hand it over. I've always felt my archive development material should have ended up in a museum of sorts and so I'm really pleased that Videogame Nation has made such good use of it. And to think, for years my mum used to tell me to throw it all away, saying it would never be useful to anyone. Since the opening night, I've taken my mum to see the show. She was very proud… and admitted she had been wrong. [Laughs.]



Arthur Parsons

LEAD DESIGNER AT TT GAMES

I managed to grab a sneaky peek of the exhibition a few days before it opened. I was asked to drop Yoda off at Urbis (we have it in our reception in Knutsford, Cheshire) and although it was half-built at the time, Videogame Nation looked awesome. It's great to see so many games available to play from yesteryear – loads of games that I played when I was younger, and the sort of titles that have helped to influence me as a contemporary developer. Having an exhibition like Videogame Nation in a place like Urbis helps to take gaming to the mainstream. It gives the medium cultural credibility.



Charles Cecil

OWNER OF REVOLUTION STUDIOS

I am right behind Videogame Nation, both as an exhibition and as an event that is important to the videogame industry. As a country, we do need to get behind British games development talent and it's great to see the exhibition showcase the many people who have made gaming great in the UK. I was very happy to hand over original artwork from *Broken Sword* for display and do a recording for one of the telephones. I wish the exhibition great success and I hope that it achieves its aim of publicising gaming to a wider audience.



» If there's any justice in the world, these two guys are currently enjoying *Rez*.



» A wealth of different sections cover all eras of Britain's illustrious gaming heritage.



"It's like walking into geek heaven," says self-confessed games addict Julian Thorpe, from Barrow-in-Furness. "Some of the most influential British games ever made are on show here."

Visitors are then taken on a tour through the ages, with the chance to play driving games such as *Burnin' Rubber* on GX4000 and *Micro Machines* on NES and then enter the arcade section with its cabinets and examples of British home ports of games such as *Operation Wolf* and *Ghosts 'N' Goblins*, all accompanied with insightful, factual information.

"It is fascinating to see how gaming has changed," says Mathias Fuchs, a senior lecturer on the MSc Creative Games and MA Creative Technology courses at Salford University. "I've never seen an exhibition that has done so much justice to British gaming."

The exhibition had been designed to appeal to as wide an audience as possible. Large introductory panels give a general and accessible overview of each section and the captions beside each game and machine allow experienced gamers to gain a greater understanding of the items on show. Quotes from the likes of Sir Clive Sinclair, Ocean's Gary Bracey and even Manchester United footballer Wayne Rooney are dotted around the exhibition space. It's possible to view the exhibition in a lunch break or spend an entire afternoon browsing. "A sign of a good event is when you see the guests smiling," says Manchester-based fashion writer Jennifer Minard. "As a non-gamer, I was slightly apprehensive, but I needn't have worried. I had a great time and the exhibition was refreshingly fun. It took you though the history of gaming in the only way it could – interactively."

As visitors get deeper into the exhibition, the games become more contemporary, including *Bully, GTA IV,* the *Lego* series and *LittleBigPlanet,* showing the medium's spectacular progression. Videogame Nation rounds off with a look at the future and a discussion of key issues surrounding health and violence in games. There is also a plea for people to donate unwanted old games to the National Videogame Archive.

"The feedback we've had so far has been positive and it's wonderful that so many people are enjoying learning more about gaming," says Crookes. "It's been a dream of mine to put on an exhibition such as this, and the support it has received from both visitors and the industry has been amazing." *

THE RETRO DEBATE

» What did you think about Videogame Nation?

VISIT **RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM** TO HAVE YOUR SAY

ID: Rtrgrl78

Absolutely brilliant. I really enjoyed it and went around a couple of times in two hours and will probably be going again before it ends. I saw some really cool machines on display and played loads. I got two cool badges (a choice of four) and when you go in you get asked which poster you want on the reverse of the leaflet (choice of two). The shop had some smart T-shirts, mugs and books, but it was slightly over priced. Am really going to try and get to one of those events, like the Lego-themed one. You all need to see this exhibition. You'll love it.

ID: rupert

It's just across the road from my office. I only had an hour for lunch, but as it's on until September and only £3 to get in… It's clearly had a lot of work put into it, really good stuff. One negative comment was the amount of emulation instead of real hardware (there was some real retro hardware in use, though). But as the show is on for so long, it's perhaps a wise move to have new equipment that's easy to replace.

ID: sirclive1

I had a trip down to Manchester today so I popped in. I enjoyed the retro phones dotted about the place with the interview loops playing, and the retro section (I had a game on *Cannon Fodder, FIFA, Ghosts 'N' Goblins, Jet Set Willy* and *Jetpac*). I also bought a couple of books from the shop below – *Supercade* and Oliver Frey's artbook, which I've been after for a while. I felt there was a bit too much modern gaming. There's also a guarded '18' section with *Bully* and *GTA IV.* £3 is a fair price. And it wasn't packed, so you could browse for ages. I think I'll take the kids next time.

ID: DPrinny

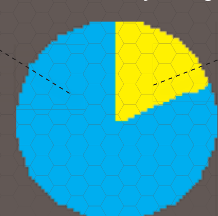
I went. If anyone goes, look for my game cover. Ditch the documentaries and show non-stop episodes of *GamesMaster*! Put a timer on *Tempest 2000* because if it wasn't for a passer-by I might still be there playing it.

ID: woody.cool

It's a bit far for me, but that won't stop me, as I usually travel hundreds of miles to gaming events.

FORUM OPINION

Videogame Nation: Will you be going?



Here's the bio...
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show*, *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting *The Sunday Night* show on Absolute Radio at 10pm.



Hi there, my name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits, The 11 O'Clock Show and Absolute Radio, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro

Digital Babysitter

I'm writing this while on holiday on a paradise island in the Indian Ocean. Well, it would be paradise, save for one thing – there are absolutely no videogames here. There isn't even a pinball table in the bar. This means I am going to have to go two whole weeks without playing anything. And it scares me. These days, games are always within reach, nearly every room in my flat is home to a console – Dreamcast in the living room, N64 in the bedroom, and my museum in the spare room. But out here? Nothing.

Being separated from my electronic friends has reminded me of how lucky we are these days. When I was younger, games were much harder to come by. I had some great handhelds – *Astro Wars* being my favourite – and of course my Dragon 32 and later my BBC. But, get this – I had to *ask* permission before I could play on them. And if my mum was feeling particularly arsey, she would turn around and say 'no'.

There was one exception to her cruelty. Every Saturday morning, she did the weekly shop in Slough. Dragging a stroppy ten year old around can't have been fun. How delighted must she and all mothers of the early-Eighties have been when high-street shops like Boots and WHSmiths introduced computers to their shelves? Hey presto! Instant babysitter.

Like hundreds of boys (sorry, sisters, but it was always fellas) across the country, I was more than happy to be deposited there. There were rows of computers all set up and ready to go, preloaded with games. And they were all free. I got my first go on *Beach Head*, *Dizzy* and *Frak!* in these Saturday-morning sessions. I even remember bashing away at *Sam Fox Strip Poker* in John Menzies when no one was looking.

A kinship with other abandoned children developed. There was no pushing or shoving; people waited patiently for their turn. Sure, there was the occasional hogger who wouldn't move no matter how many times you went to grab the keyboard when he finished, but these were few and far between. And you knew at some point his parents would be back to take the selfish sod away anyway.

After a while, shops grew savvy to this blatant abuse of their facilities and stopped having games loaded up. You could ask to test some out, but the staff would hover, giving you only a few minutes before resetting the machine. Ever versatile in these situations, some hardcore geeks transformed from gamers to programmers – typing in little BASIC routines. I soon progressed from 10 PRINT "IAIN IS SKILLS", 20 GOTO 10, to actually writing little quizzes that asked for the player's name and then fired a series of questions at them. Wouldn't have a clue how to do it now. It's all to do with IF…THEN and strings I think.

If this fortnight in the wilderness has taught me anything it's that you should never be complacent. Always carry a console with you. I knew I should have tried to cram that Vectrex into the suitcase.



If this fortnight in the wilderness taught me anything it's to always carry a console

What was your first presenting gig? Occasionally hosting *Stand Up Live!* on the now-defunct Live! TV. It came on just after the topless darts.

MICRO BYTES
Snippets of news from the exciting world of retro



» Don't Throw Out Your Old Pads
Wii's Virtual Console service is an amazing repository for retro gems, but despite the release of Nintendo's own Classic Controller, playing these games without the original pads often feels wrong. Thankfully, Komodo is releasing the Innex Retro Adaptor that will let you plug in your old controllers. For now you'll have to make do with importing one for around $20 from the States.



» Contra Reborn on WiiWare
Following Capcom's lead with the brilliant *Mega Man 9*, Konami is resurrecting the esteemed *Contra* series for a new generation. WiiWare release *Contra Rebirth* bears more than a passing resemblance to the SNES classic *Contra III* and promises to feature the explosive gameplay for which the series is famed. It's already out in Japan, but Konami remains tight-lipped about a Western release.



» Steve Wiebe: King Of Gum
Steve Wiebe, star of the hit reality movie *The King Of Kong: A Fistful Of Dollars*, is taking another stab at beating Billy Mitchell's current *Donkey Kong* high score of 1,050,200 points. US chewing gum manufacturer Stride is offering Wiebe $10,001 in quarters if he can beat the current champ. We'd like to think he'll use his new contacts to offer Duke Nukem some gum, as he's fallen on hard times lately.



» [PC] The eternally delayed *Duke Nukem Forever* slips yet again.

"Take-Two remains adamant it will not finance further work on Duke Nukem Forever"

IS DUKE FINALLY ALL OUT OF GUM?

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER ON HOLD AS PUBLISHER AND DEVELOPER GO TO WAR

Since development on Duke Nukem Forever began, ten years ago, we've witnessed three Star Wars prequels, the birth of Harry Potter and the coming and going of the entire Matrix trilogy. In fact, Britney Spears' pop career hadn't even started in 1997. *Forever* is quite possibly the most appropriately named game of all time and recent events suggest that it's set to remain vapourware for the foreseeable future.

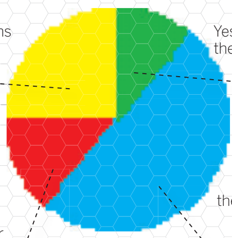
Since production started on *Duke Nukem Forever*, the game has suffered numerous high-profile and extremely embarrassing delays. Publisher Take-Two Interactive is taking developer 3D Realms to court over its failure to finish the game. Now an industry joke, *Forever* is often referred to as *Duke Nukem Whenever* or *DNF: Did Not Finish*.

Some promising shots were released recently that showed a highly detailed Duke bristling with attitude. And 3D Realms producer George Broussard made some very positive comments at the start of 2009 relating to the chances of the game seeing the light of day this year. However, in light of recent events, *Duke Nukem Forever* is now officially on hold.

It was believed that 3D Realms was shutting its doors, but a statement issued by the company implies it's merely downsizing and will continue to operate. Development on *DNF*, however, has been terminated. Take-Two has a firm grip on the publishing rights, and remains adamant it will not finance further work on the title. Artwork and character models have since been leaked by former 3DR employees, offering a tantalising glimpse of the game we've been waiting for but will probably never get to play. For an amusing look at all the world events that have occurred since *DNF* started development, head to http://duke.a-13.net. *

FORUM OPINION
VISIT **RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM** TO HAVE YOUR SAY

Are you sad that DNF might never be released?



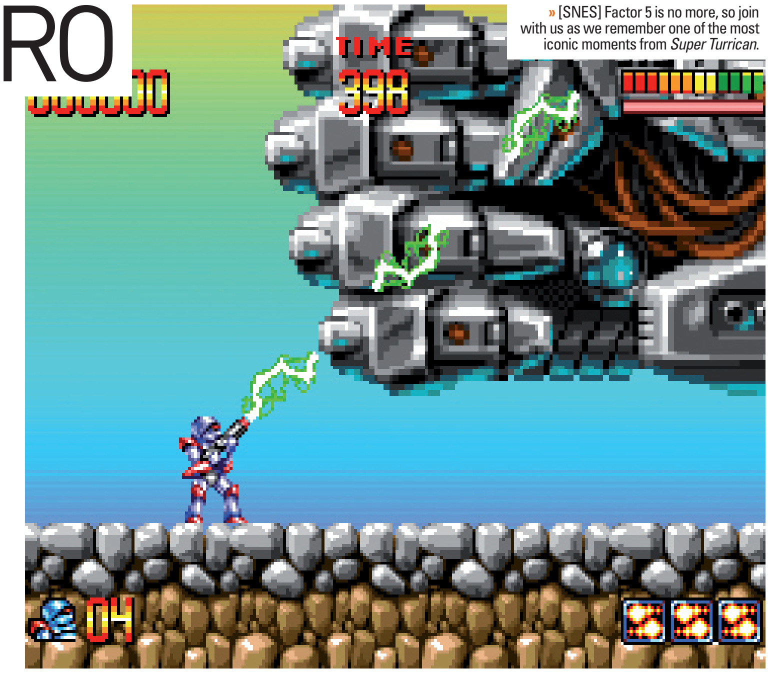
"I'm quite disappointed it's not getting a release. After all these years and all the hype, I was looking forward to seeing it and instead it gets canned. I remember reading its announcement while I was still in secondary school, ahh the memories..." – **ShadowMan**

"It's a shame. I hope another team picks it up. The leaked material looked like a funny, old-school FPS. I'm fed up with all the modern warfare crap. I just want a hero who throws a one-liner every time I shoot an alien in the head." – **Type2XS**



WARP FACTOR ZERO

FACTOR 5 FINALLY CLOSES ITS DOORS



» [SNES] Factor 5 is no more, so join with us as we remember one of the most iconic moments from *Super Turrican*.

It's a bitter and difficult time for everyone at the moment, but spare a thought for the employees of Factor 5. After an impressive 22 years in the industry, the California-based company recently shut its doors, following the closure of Brash Entertainment, for which Factor 5 had been creating a new Superman game.

Factor 5 was established in 1987 and originally based in Cologne, Germany. The founding members include Julian Eggebrecht, who, along with the rest of the company's co-founders had worked at Rainbow Arts on titles such as *Katakis* and the excellent *Turrican,* which they continued to release as Factor 5.

The talented developers soon fell under the watchful eye of Nintendo and were quickly snapped up as a second-party developer, releasing *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine*, *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron* and *Star Wars: Battle For Naboo* for the Nintendo 64.

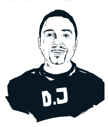
Technically proficient, the studio also developed several middleware programs for Nintendo, including MusyX and DiVX for Games SDK, which was put to particularly impressive use in the Nintendo 64 port of Capcom's *Resident Evil 2*. Factor 5 stayed with Nintendo during the GameCube years, impressing launch owners with the graphically incredible *Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader.*

The success didn't last however, with *Rogue Squadron III: Rebel Strike* receiving average reviews, while *Thornado* – a spin-off of *Turrican* – was never released, much to the dismay of fans everywhere. Factor 5 eventually jumped the good ship Nintendo and began working on Sony's PS3. The end result was *Lair,* a jaw-droppingly good game that saw you controlling a huge dragon via PS3's motion-controlled DualShock pad. Sadly, the actual gameplay was nowhere near as impressive, and was incredibly similar to the *Rogue Leader* titles – one stage even mimicked the AT-AT attack.

A potential team-up with Nintendo for a new *Pilotwings* game never came to be, so Factor 5 continued work on its *Superman* project for Brash, before catastrophe struck and the American developer closed its doors in November 2008. This may not be the end however, as Factor 5 GmbH is still alive and well in Germany, so the San Rafael studio may well rise again. *

* WHAT WE THINK

Darran



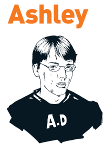
Lair was hugely disappointing, although it still looks incredible, but I'll always have fond memories of blasting TIE-fighters in *Rogue Leader* and the giant Mode 7 fist from *Super Turrican*. Good bye, Factor 5, you'll be missed.

Stuart



I think it's a shame Factor 5 has been forced to close its doors. It made some of the most enjoyable aerial combat *Star Wars* games to ever grace games consoles, and although I'm in the minority here, I didn't think *Lair* was all bad.

Ashley



Factor who?, I've never been that impressed with Factor 5. It's made more duds than hits so I can't say I'm sad to see it go. I feel sorry for the people who lost their jobs, but the videogame world isn't going to suffer.



WHAT IF?

Your favourite next-gen games remade, retro style

Subject No 2
Assassin's Creed

IMAGINE A PARALLEL world where the latest games were released on 8-bit computers and not the current-generation machines they're currently available on. Now imagine *Assassin's Creed* had been released on C64 and that it was a technically proficient platformer with the power to drop jaws. Licensed by Brøderbund, as a follow-up to *Prince Of Persia,* it features the same slick engine but is enhanced by its extravagant kill system that greatly improves on *POP*'s slick combat.





» [C64] Oh, how we would have loved to play *Assassin's Creed* on C64.

Here's my bio…
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.



Hello retro gamers, my name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years



Actual Intelligence Vs Artificial Intelligence

I was playing that masterpiece of game design R-Type a few days ago. Occasionally I go back to remind myself of whether it really was that tricky or if I was just being soft in my early-teens. As you probably know and hopefully agree, R-Type certainly is fiendish even now. It's the original hardline shoot-'em-up – you versus the game. And 'the game', back in the day, was devised by cunning humans, in this case employed by Irem to lay down the gauntlet. If you beat the game you beat the challenge set by these dastardly bastards and deserved a pat on the back.

This made me rethink my experience of playing *Resident Evil 5*, and I'm only using this as an example because it's fairly new. Anyway, *RE5* is one of those games lauded for its lifelike AI – enemies that think as a team to give you a torrid time. What actually happens is that you're confronted by a mob of morons that home in on you like a magnet. Indeed, the more 'intelligent' they become the more stupidity they'll exhibit, posing no threat whatsoever, like rolling around on the floor and ducking in and out of cover while you stand there watching, bewildered, before tossing a grenade.

I enjoyed *Resident Evil 5*'s excellent level design and the stress of having to manage my supplies – the game cleverly providing health or ammo depending on my situation. I punched the air after defeating 'you know who' at the end – a great example of a boss fight with preset routines that I needed to observe and then figure out how to overcome. I beat you, Capcom! Please try again.

The recent games that employ 'lifelike AI' are starting to feel like household chores. It's like I'm the pest-control guy attending to business for clients too scared or lazy to handle it themselves. I suppose, for anyone to stand a chance against ridiculous odds, it's becoming harder to balance scripted routines with AI freedom, but I'd rather challenge the mind of a skilled game designer and choreographed scenarios than carry on messing with faulty robots.

It's like the music software that writes songs based on mathematical rules versus a gifted musician composing a masterpiece. I saw a TV programme – although sorry, I can't remember what it was called – where a computer composed in the style of Beethoven. It was crap. In the same way, I reckon videogame enemies that aren't capable of thinking for themselves spoil the magic that's better left to magicians.

Capcom never banged on about AI in *Street Fighter II*, but I'm sure that CPU Dhalsim could read my mind.

> The more 'intelligent' they become the more stupidity they exhibit

What's the best game you've ever reviewed? I reviewed *Mario 64* for C&VG, which felt like a momentous occasion.

Retro Booty

TREASURES FROM THE RETRO DEEP



Duck Shoot

- **RRP:** £29.99
- **Manufacturer:** Paladone
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

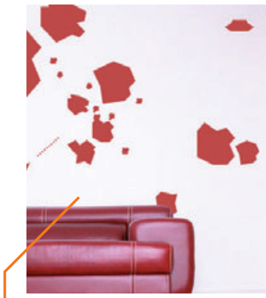
Now, this takes us back. Remember the days when you'd go along to the fair, ride on a naff ghost train, guzzle down a disgusting burger and try your hand at a darts game that was impossible to win? Well, now you can relive those precious memories with this rather snazzy infrared Duck Shoot game.

Metroid T-Shirt

- **RRP:** $17.99
- **Manufacturer:** Nintendo
- **Buy it from:** www.tshirtgurus.co.uk

Profess your love for our cover girl Samus Aran and her original adventure by treating yourself to this excellent T-shirt. It's an officially licensed garment and features a replication of the original NES box. Snap it up today.





Asteroid Wall Stickers

- **RRP:** £18.00
- **Manufacturer:** Spin Collective
- **Buy it from:** www.spincollective.co.uk

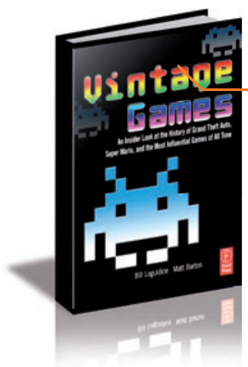
If you're being nagged by your other half to do the decorating, then pick up these amazing-looking wall stickers and plaster them all over the wall. Not only will the inside of your house look like a coin-op, but also she'll think twice before letting you decorate again.

Space Invaders Alarm Clock

- **RRP:** $80
- **Publisher:** Taito
- **Buy it from:** www.japantrendshop.com

More *Space Invaders* love thanks to an official Taito alarm clock that not only features authentic-looking invaders on its LCD display, but will also awaken you with classic sound effects from the original arcade game.





Vintage Games

- **RRP:** £17.99
- **Publisher:** Focal Press
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

A brilliant book by Bill Loguidice and Matt Barton that looks at a range of classic influential games from *Space Invaders* and *Castle Wolfenstein* to *The Sims* and *Dance, Dance Revolution* and examines how they have all helped to shape the industry as it stands today. Essential reading.

Blaze Digital Arcade Stick

- **RRP:** £34.99
- **Publisher:** Blaze
- **Buy it from:** www.blazeeurope.com

If you can't afford the official *Street Fighter IV* arcade stick from Mad Catz then you might like to invest in this stick from Blaze. It's obviously not as durable or responsive, but you can't really go wrong with its low price point.





Pac-Man T-Shirt

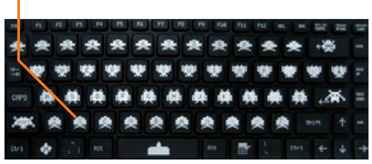
- **RRP:** £11.95
- **Publisher:** Namco
- **Buy it from:** www.play.com

Treat yourself to this gloriously over-the-top T-shirt and show the world just how much you adore Namco's yellow mascot. It's an officially licensed product so all the money goes straight to the Pac-Man retirement fund. Probably.

Space Invaders Keyboard

- **RRP:** £16.99
- **Publisher:** Bendi Board
- **Buy it from:** www.cutegadgets.co.uk

Need a new keyboard? Love *Space Invaders*? Then you really need to get your hands on this natty device that will enable you to stroke alien invaders and type amazing prose at the same time. It's waterproof as well so you can even take it in the bath.





Racing The Beam

- **RRP:** £14.95
- **Publisher:** MITPress
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

A wonderful little book charting the humble beginnings of the Atari 2600 and the impact it had on gaming. *Racing The Beam* takes an in-depth look at the difficulties with coding on the system, and features interviews with a number of developers.

TREASURE OF THE MONTH



Sega Mega Drive: 15-in-1 Console

- **RRP:** £39.99
- **Publisher:** Blaze
- **Buy it from:** www.blazeeuope.com

Yes you can get Mega Drives off eBay far cheaper, but seldom are they as bargainous as this latest official product from Blaze. For starters, it comes with 15 built-in games, ranging from *Sonic & Knuckles* to *Golden Axe* and the almighty *Shadow Dancer*. We were impressed with the actual emulation, although some have complained about certain titles not sounding quite right, and while the included pads aren't perfect, you can use official Mega Drive pads with this device.

The real draw here, however, is that you can play cartridges from any region in the world, meaning that you no longer have to worry about whether a game will work before picking it up online. Now, we must stress that we obviously haven't tried every Mega Drive game ever made, but we were able to load up the likes of *Comix Zone* and *Devil Crash* with no problems whatsoever. The use of composite is a bit of a shame, but Sega's 15-in-1 console is nevertheless superb value for money.

* A MOMENT WITH...

David Crane

Every issue, we put an industry legend in the hotseat. This month, we met David Crane, creator of Pitfall! and co-founder of Activision



» You'd smile too if you'd co-founded videogaming behemoth Activision.

Who is David Crane?

Well, he's a talented ex-Atari programmer who, unhappy with never being credited for his work, decided to co-found Activision, gaming's first third-party publisher. He now makes iPhone games at his company SkyWorks.

Which of your games would you recommend to our readers, and why?
My iPhone game *Arcade Bowling* as it's the most fun you can have with your right hand.

What is your proudest memory?
I play a lot of tennis. I'm a big guy with a big serve. Prior to my first-round tournament match against an acquaintance, I had to put up with a lot of trash talking from the guy. When I opened the match with four straight aces I was proud to shut the guy up.

What's the most difficult thing you've encountered while working on a game?
That would be every minute working with the Atari 2600. There were never enough resources to do everything that we wanted, so it was a constant battle of trade-offs.

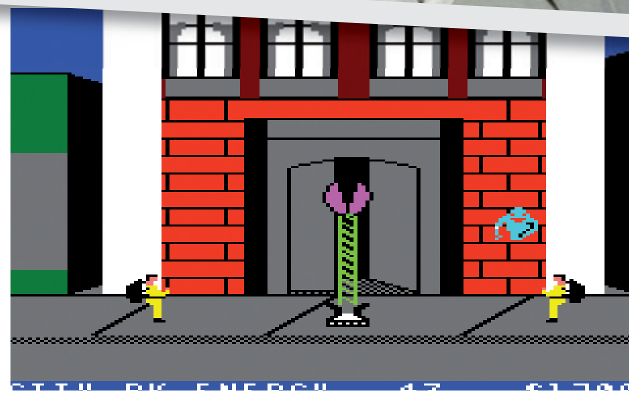
Which industry veteran do you admire?
Trip Hawkins. After his success at EA, he recognised that one day your cell phone would be a real personal computer. iPhone is proving him right.

How would you like your games to be remembered?
I like it when my games can be played years, or even decades later and still be fun.

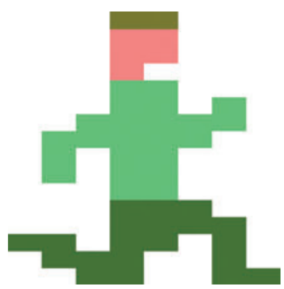
Which game do you wish you'd made, and why?
I've always joked about doing *The History Of War*. Two players face each other with Stone-Age weapons, starting by throwing rocks. The loser of each round gets a weapon upgrade to change the balance of power. This arms race continues up to 21st Century weapons. I never made this game, but if I had, I could lay claim to the "first personal combat game of all kinds." You know I'm kidding, right?

What opportunities has making videogames given you?
I've travelled all over the US and the world due to my job. On one such trip in the US, I met my wife of 25 years. What better opportunity than that?

What's your darkest memory of being in the games industry?
Well, the business runs in cycles – boom and bust, and that means layoffs are inevitable during the bust times. As a person in management, any one of those layoffs is the worst time imaginable.



» [CPC] Crane's *Ghostbusters* was a massive hit and fun to play, as well.



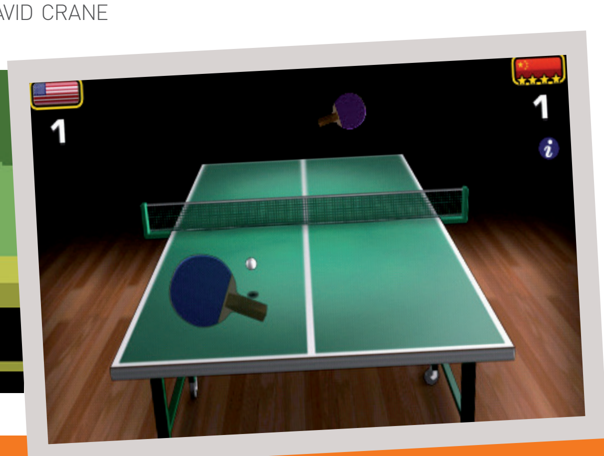
> "On one trip in the US I met my wife of 25 years"
> DAVID CRANE

And your best?
When our first batch of newly minted game cartridges hit the stores, the Activision game design group made a lunch trip to a mall in Sunnyvale, California. We went in and there they were – rows of our games. The first time you see something you created – from no existing company to product being sold – is a very special experience.

Can you share one interesting anecdote about your time in the industry?
My first game for Activision was *Dragster*. A game only lasted six seconds, but you could play for hours trying to shave a hundredth of a second off your time. Our mid-west regional sales group was an Italian father-and-son team in Chicago, who looked, sounded, and dressed like they were 'connected'. Anyway, the son ran up to me at a trade event and said: "I haven't slept in days. I've been playing *Dragster* for 35 hours straight. I could kill you for doing this to me." Fortunately he seemed to be joking. Still, that is the first (and hopefully the last) death threat I have ever gotten from the Mob.

How has the industry changed over the last 20 years?
Games are becoming ever larger, requiring millions of dollars to produce. But people are starting to realise that smaller, casual games can be every bit as good as their complex counterparts. In fact, these casual games are just like the old Activision games for Atari. The business has come full circle. *





retrodiary

19 June – 16 July

» A month of retro events both past and present



19 June 1978
■ GAME: Taito releases *Space Invaders*, the most successful arcade title ever. The game was nearly called *Space Monsters*.



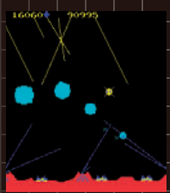
19 June 2009
■ *Rygar: The Battle Of Argus* cuts up the competition on Nintendo's Wii.



20 June 1983
■ ANNIVERSARY: The birth of Crash Micro Games Action, a mail-order software company whose eight-page catalogue became *Crash* magazine.



21 June 1984
■ NEWS: Amstrad's debut home computer, the CPC 464, goes on sale at a London branch of Rumbelows.



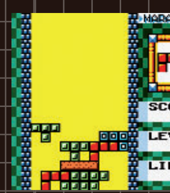
23 June 1980
■ NEWS: Atari releases its newest arcade machine, *Missile Command*, at the height of the Cold War. Trackballs at the ready, lads…



22 June 2005
■ ANNIVERSARY: The UK release of Nintendo's latest iteration of its successful Game Boy handheld, Game Boy Advance.



22 June 1998
■ GAME: *FIFA: Road To World Cup 98* released on several formats. The first *FIFA* game to feature a licensed title song, Blur's *Song 2*. Woo hoo…



21 June 1985
■ Alexey Pajitnov finishes developing *Tetris* while working at the Academy of Science in Moscow.



23 June 1983
■ NEWS: Britain's first computer comic *Load Runner* launches. The bi-weekly comic lasted just 13 issues.



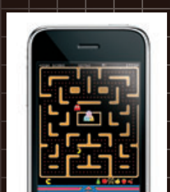
23 June 1991
■ NEWS: Sonic's first videogame appearance with the simultaneous UK and US releases of *Sonic The Hedgehog*.



23 June 1996
■ GAME: The hairy-lipped plumber makes his 3D debut when *Super Mario 64* is released on Nintendo 64 in Japan.



24 June 1997
■ GAME: Race around Choco Island or Rainbow Road with the UK release of *Mario Kart 64* on the N64.

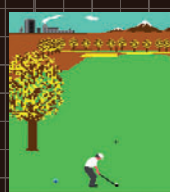


29 June 2007
■ INDUSTRY: Apple unveils its new iPhone in America. It won't make its rest-of-the-world debut until 11 July 2008.

27 June 1972
■ NEWS: Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney found Atari. Two months later the *Pong* prototype arcade machine is being played.



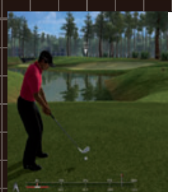
26 June 2009
■ *Super Stardust Portable* makes the leap from PlayStation 3 to PSP. Don't miss it.



25 June 1986
■ GAME: US Gold and Access release the all-time classic golf game *Leaderboard*, written by the talented Carver brothers, on C64.



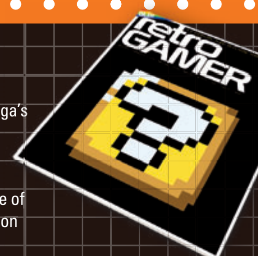
1 July 1984
■ INDUSTRY: Commodore founder Jack Tramiel buys the computing and games console divisions of Atari for $240 million.



3 July 2009
■ *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10* will be teeing up for release on the Xbox 360 today.



8 July 1995
■ INDUSTRY: Sega's UK release of the Saturn. Though a great system, the impending release of the first PlayStation restricted sales.



16 July 2009
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

Retro Evolution

Looking at the classic franchises being revived for a new generation of gamers



1987

- » **NAME:** PHANTASY STAR
- » **SYSTEM:** MASTER SYSTEM
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **PRICE:** £39.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** SEGA RD4
- » **PLAYERS:** 1



2009

- » **NAME:** PHANTASY STAR 0
- » **SYSTEM:** NINTENDO DS
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **PRICE:** £34.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** SEGA
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

Phantasy Star

The History Lesson

Both Square's Final Fantasy and Sega's Phantasy Star franchises are 22 years old this year. While Square's series has been driven by insanely beautiful visuals, rich narrative story telling and intricate sub-quests that can often take an age to complete, Sega's series long ago cast off its single-player shackles to create an experience more akin to the MMORPGs popular today.

Back in 1989 it was oh-so different though, with Sega specifically creating an adventure to take on the NES that was a world away from the traditional fantasy-themed release Square put out several months earlier. Interplanetary travel, guns, space ships and detailed cut-scenes all helped *Phantasy Star* stand apart from its peers, while its pseudo 3D engine – created by Yuji Naka – ensured it was technically a world away from Square's game (although the scales have drastically shifted in recent years). Coming on a massive 8MB cartridge, *Phantasy Star* was a beast of a game when it was finally released in December and proved that Sega was perfectly capable of making more complex titles.

Realising it was onto a good thing – *Phantasy Star* sold amazingly well in the US despite initially retailing at $10 less than a console at the time – sequels inevitably followed. *Phantasy Star II, III* and *IV* were released between 1989 and 1993 (although *Part IV* wasn't released until 1995 in the UK) and continued to build on the themes that proved so popular in the original Master System game. The impressive 3D dungeons that had wowed Master System owners were now a thing of the past, with the dungeons taking on a more familiar overhead look. *Part II* was also set 1,000 years after the original *Phantasy Star*, with *Part IV* being set another 1,000 years after that. Interestingly *Part III: Generations Of Doom* initially appears to stand apart from the rest of the franchise due to its medieval setting, although those playing through to the end would realise just how well the game tied in.

To complement the Mega Drive games, Sega also released two portable outings, both of which appeared on Game Gear. *Phantasy Star Gaiden* and *Adventure* were released in 1992. *Gaiden* was a spin-off of the original *Phantasy Star*, while *Adventure* was set during the same time as *Part II*. Sadly, both games were only released in Japan so unless you're fluent in the language, don't expect to get too much out of them.

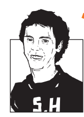
The biggest change to the *Phantasy Star* universe was with the arrival of Sega's Dreamcast. All of a sudden the franchise opened up, quite literally, as

* What we think



As much as I've been enjoying *Phantasy Star Portable*, not being able to play online is a real annoyance. *Zero* appears to be the answers to my prayers though. All I have to do now is sit back and wait.

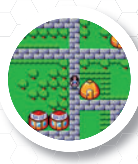
* What we think

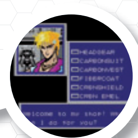


As much as I like the look of *Zero*, I'd be perfectly happy for a good old-fashioned adventure in the style of the Master System original. Saying that, though, Darran's bound to be picking this up, so I'll definitely be joining in the fun.

Selected Phantasy Star Timeline

Phantasy Star
YEAR RELEASED: 1987
SYSTEM: MASTER SYSTEM





Phantasy Star II
YEAR RELEASED: 1989
SYSTEM: MEGA DRIVE

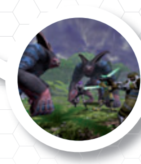
Phantasy Star III: Generations Of Doom
YEAR RELEASED: 1990
SYSTEM: MEGA DRIVE

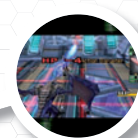




Phantasy Star Adventure
YEAR RELEASED: 1992
SYSTEM: GAME GEAR

Phantasy Star Online
YEAR RELEASED: 2000
SYSTEM: DREAMCAST





Phantasy Star Online III: C.A.R.D. Revolution
YEAR RELEASED: 2003
SYSTEM: GAMECUBE

Phantasy Star Universe
YEAR RELEASED: 2006
SYSTEM: XBOX 360



What's Changed?

The new additions that weren't in the original game



THEN: The original *Phantasy Star* was a solo experience that had you exploring the solar system of Algol on your own.

NOW: Like *Phantasy Star Online*, you can team up with friends, but now you can use the DS to create your own custom greetings.



THEN: Unlike *Final Fantasy, Phantasy Star* used static cut-scenes in order to tell its thoroughly engaging back story.

NOW: The cut-scenes from the original game return, but now they're actually animated – a first for the *Phantasy Star* series.



THEN: Unlike many RPGs of the time *Phantasy Star* adopted a pseudo-3D approach when battling the game's many enemies.

NOW: Combat is far more complex now with strafing, selecting different weapons on the fly and new weapons all available.

quests could now be completed by heading online with three other players – leading to expensive phone bills, plenty of late nights and falling asleep next to your Dreamcast's keyboard. Level grinding and weapon collecting also took a more prominent role, while MAGS, which were first introduced in *Part IV*, could now be upgraded. After appearing on several different systems and releasing a disappointing card game, *PSO* morphed into *Phantasy Star Universe*.

While the online play remained – although an additional life subscription was still required – Sega now included a standalone adventure that enabled you to be accompanied by a group of computer-controlled characters. Sadly, the included story wasn't a patch on the rich tapestries that Sega used to weave on the franchise back in the day, and a further annoyance came when gamers realised they couldn't use their offline character to play online – something that was eventually rectified in add-on pack *Ambition Of The Illuminus*.

The most recent additions to the *Phantasy Star* franchise are both portable, and while they were actually released in Japan last year, *Phantasy Star Portable* for the PSP has only just hit retail shelves in the UK (you can read our full thoughts on page 90). Despite being a great little addition to the franchise, it's severely hampered by a drab storyline and a complete lack of official online play. Which is where *Phantasy Star 0* steps in.

Due out by the end of the year, *Phantasy Star 0* is the first handheld game in the franchise with online play. And best of all, there isn't even a subscription fee. Players will have access to an enormous number of weapons, while the visual style is more in line with *Phantasy Star Online* and not *Universe*. Players will also be able to create their own visual chat icons for interacting with players. Early reports suggest that *Phantasy Star 0* has successfully captured the magic of the Dreamcast game, but we'll bring you the definitive verdict on this in a few short months. *

* What we think



I ran up some massive phone bills while playing *PSO* on the Dreamcast, so not having to pay is already making my wallet very happy. *Phantasy Star Portable* is great fun, but *Zero* appears to be the real online deal.

THE PROBING QUESTIONS

We speak to Kawabata Masayuki about the latest Phantasy Star



RG: What does the DS version offer?
KM: The 'Bubble chat' from *PSO* and *PSU* has been further refined into the new "Visual Chat" feature. Users can scribble text or drawings using the touch pen, which will then appear on-screen.

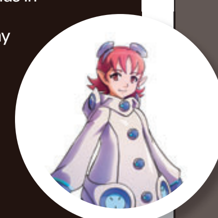
In terms of new action, the 'Quick Evasion' button has been added to take a step back in an emergency. There is also a new line-up of weapon categories: Gun Blade, which can shoot and smash in a single stroke, and Shield, the only item that can block attacks.

In this DS version, some new races will appear, such as the Hanewm. Plus, for the first time in the series, all the visuals are animated.

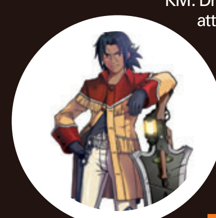
RG: Of all the Mega Drive games, what was your favourite and why?
KM: That would be *Phantasy Star IV: The End Of The Millennium*. The series always had eye-popping configurations and systems. As a user, I was amazed every time a new title was released.

RG: How will you recapture the community of the Dreamcast game?
KM: This title provides wireless multiplay, which makes access to the community easy without an internet connection. Also, by using the Wi-Fi Connection, users can exchange Friend Codes to play with friends in remote locations through the internet for free. It's a great way to team up with friends and enjoy the adventure together.

Users can also exchange visual chat and items among party mates. You can even form a party with a complete stranger and fight your way through the game together.



RG: What's your favourite Phantasy Star boss and why?
KM: Dragon from *PSO*. It had various attack methods and I always struggled to defeat it. I still remember the amazement when I first encountered it and the excitement when I defeated it with my friends. Actions like glide attack have been passed on to the Rayburn dragon in *PSØ*.



RG: Will it make an appearance in the new game?
KM: It's not the same dragon, but the new boss called Rayburn has elements from it. This is the first boss I made for this game. There were hard times, but I feel even more attached to it. When I saw this boss tornado-glide for the first time, I knew this would be a great game.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM APRIL 1987



APRIL 1987 – Amtix! goes, adverts make a bit of a boob, Ultimate goes Martianoid, Therion sinks, Hydrofool swims, Toms sells up and MicroProse turns software pirate. Richard Burton keel hauls, walks the plank and shouts "avast" a lot… Haharrr!



» [ZX Spectrum] *Enduro Racer*: A fine game on Spectrum, but here's how not to fly through the air on a motorbike…



» [CPC] *Heavy On The Magick*: Was the unreleased *Trials Of Therion* actually *Heavy On The Magick*?



» [CPC] *Short Circuit*: An okay conversion of an okay Eighties flick. Number 5 is alive? Not if I load up *Manic Miner*.

After a short run of just 18 issues (19 if you include the preview issue) Newsfield's Amstrad-specific mag, *Amtix!*, was discontinued. The name lived on, however, because Database Publications, owner of *Computing With The Amstrad* magazine, bought the title from Newsfield and incorporated it within its own title.

A trend emerged during April regarding inlay artwork on soon-to-be released games. The advertising method had its knockers, and so did the adverts… The inlay and advertising artwork tended to favour the curvy female form, which would help shift barrow-loads of games while also keeping many pubescent teenagers hammering away at their joysticks for hours. A fitness programme and a public service rolled into one.

And the perpetrators of this dastardly eye candy trap? Please be upstanding for *Game Over* (Imagine Software and nipple slippage), *Barbarian* (Palace Software and Maria Whittaker) and *The Fear: Storm II* (Mastertronic and the amply bosomed sword-wielding woman). Gaming wise, the best of the bunch was *Barbarian*, a hack-and-slash fight-fest featuring some great graphics, bloody sword play and frequent beheadings. It was thoroughly entertaining with some nice touches, like the reptilian fellow who arrives to clear away the defeated player after each contest, occasionally toe punting the severed head off screen.

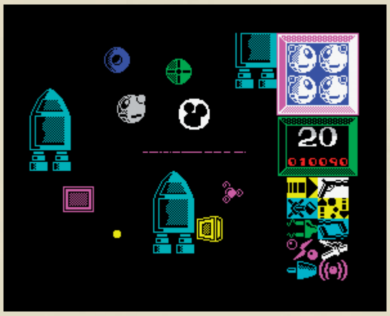


» *Barbarian* by Palace Software. Big Sword courtesy of Wolf from *Gladiators*. Big everything else courtesy of Maria Whittaker.

Activision had been beavering away with three new arcade conversions: *Wonderboy*, *Quartet* and *Enduro Racer*. Although quality of conversion varied from system to system, only *Enduro Racer* achieved consistently good reviews across all platforms.

It seemed Ultimate Play The Game had been in hibernation, but following the surprise buyout by US Gold, it was back with a new offering. *Martianoids* was a return to the 3D isometric arcade adventuring days that propelled Ultimate's name into the stratosphere (on Spectrum at least) just a few short years earlier. However, *Martianoids* turned out to be more a US Gold product than a Stamper Brothers production in every aspect – controls, graphics, sound. Everything was satisfactory but nowhere near the Ultimate standards.

Presumably, the change in the 3D graphic style meant the use of Ultimate's old Filmation engines weren't part of the US Gold deal. Either way, the Amstrad, MSX and Spectrum-owning Ultimate faithful faced a dilemma of whether or not to plump for *Martianoids*. There was news that a further Ultimate game would be out later in the year. Maybe that would ease the pain of this pseudo-Ultimate release? Don't hold your breath, people, it's *Bubbler*…

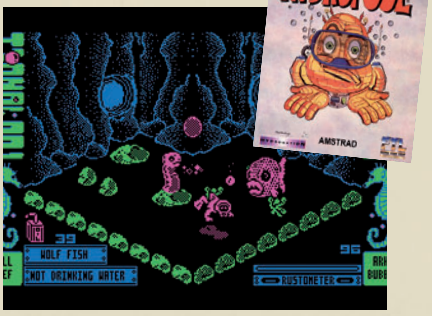


» [ZX Spectrum] *I, Ball*: A kind of shoot-'em-up for balls with added power ups to collect on the way.

Gargoyle Games was tormenting us with the news that the newest addition to its stylised graphical adventures, such as *Tir Na Nog* and *Dun Darach*, would be *The Trials Of Therion*. Although Gargoyle bossman Greg Follis claimed the game was finished, he decided to hold the title back until he felt "the time was right". If that's software-house code speak for "we began programming but couldn't be arsed to finish it off", then that would certainly explain its AWOL status having never surfaced.

One game that was on the cards for a release via Gargoyle's sister label Faster Than Light was *Hydrofool*. This was yet another isometric 3D arcade adventure, this time featuring the star of Gargoyle's earlier isometric gaming success *Sweevo's World*.

Rather than being a cheap-shot sequel cashing in on



» [CPC] *Hydrofool*: An ace follow-up to *Sweevo's World*. Graphically it's similar, but the water means it plays differently.

1987

APRIL NEWS



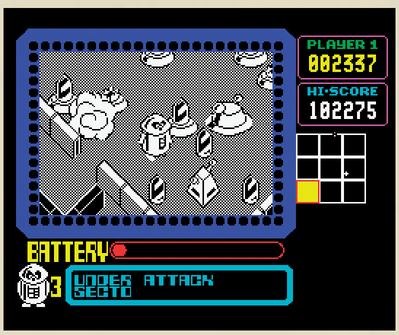
» "It's only a game if you win, but if you lose it's a stinking waste of time," or so said *Married With Children*'s Al Bundy.

18 April saw a lucky escape for sky diver Debbie Williams when a jump in Arizona went very wrong. She jumped from the plane at 13,500 feet, along with several other formation sky divers, and collided with a fellow jumper, knocking herself unconscious and resulting in a 100mph plummet towards the ground. Their sky diving instructor, Gregory Robertson, exited the plane a few seconds later and saw the drama unfolding beneath him. He drew in his arms and dived head-first at a speed of 200mph. Catching up with Williams just 3,500 feet above ground, he managed to manoeuvre her into a safe position and, at 2,000 feet, open her emergency parachute, along with his own, with barely seconds to spare. Williams suffered several broken ribs, a fractured skull and internal bleeding. Robertson suffered a few minor injuries and was hailed a hero.



» Stay at home and play *Go! Sports Skydiving* on PS3. It's less dangerous and you can eat at the same time…

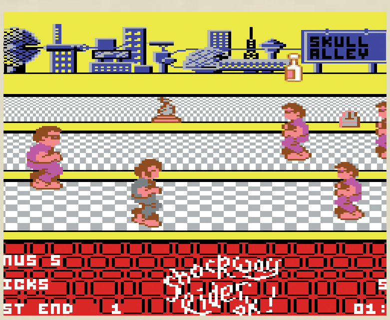
On a cheerier note, 5 April marked the American TV premiere of *Married With Children,* which introduced the world to the dysfunctional Bundy family. Shoe salesman Al and his wife Peggy, who had big hair and an equally big mouth, proved comedy gold. Throw in Christina Applegate as their stunning but halfwitted daughter and everything was right with the world.



» [ZX Spectrum] *Martianoids*: It's 3D, it's by Ultimate (in a US Gold sort of way) and it's not very good.

Sweevo's success, *Hydrofool* was a superb underwater adventure with quirky humour and testing puzzles. It was certainly closer to the standard of game Ultimate should have been producing.

The FTL guys may even have had the audacity to poke fun at the new Ultimate proprietor's lack of Filmation ownership by advertising the use of its own new graphics engine, Hydromation, describing it as "fabulous but irrelevant". Ouch.



» [Commodore 64] *Shockway Rider*: FTL's quirky moving-walkways game was interesting for a while but lacked variety.

Hairy soccer supremo Kevin Toms reported that his firm, Addictive Games, and subsidiary label Silicon Joy, had been taken over by the Prism Leisure Corporation. Toms was also signed up by Prism in a four-game deal to produce titles for his former label.

Simulation developer MicroProse revealed its involvement in software piracy. *Pirates!* coded by Sid Meier, was due for release in a few months. While C64 and Amstrad would soon be soaking up every minute of this masterpiece, Amiga and ST owners would have to wait a few more years.

Amstrad Action assessed a bumper batch of games with *Academy: Tau Ceti II* (CRL) scoring the Mastergame award. Following close behind, clutching their AA Raves, were *Short Circuit* (Ocean), *Bombjack II* (Elite), *The Sentinel* (Firebird), *Flyspy* (Mastertronic) and *Koronis Rift* (Activision).

Over at *Crash*, Spectrum gamers could sink their teeth into *Head Over Heels* (Ocean), *Vulcan* (CCS), and *I, Ball* (Firebird).

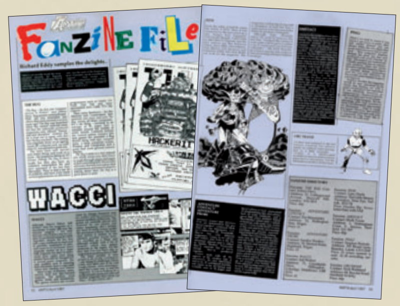
C&VG reviewers must have been on cloud nine with a huge crop of new releases achieving 'Hit' status. The full roll call was *Greyfell* (Starlight, Spectrum), *Shockway Rider* (FTL, Spectrum), *Star Raiders II* (Atari, Atari XE/XL), *West Bank* (Gremlin Graphics, C64), *MGT* (Loriciels, Amstrad), *Delta* (Thalamus, C64), *Aliens* (Activision, C64), *Leviathan* (English Software, C64), *Double Take* (Ocean, Spectrum), *Hive* (Firebird, Spectrum), *Bactron* (Loriciels, Amstrad), *Krakout* (Gremlin Graphics, C64), *180* (Mastertronic, C64) and *Dragon's Lair 2: Escape From Singe's Castle* (Software Projects, C64). Game Of The Month was split between *Gunship* (MicroProse, C64) and *Feud* (Bulldog, Amstrad).

THIS MONTH IN…

AMTIX!



While *Amtix!* issue 18 was to be the last, Richard Eddy decided to sample the delights of the homegrown fanzine scene, which at least promised to continue a bit longer than *Amtix!* Among the homebrew periodicals on offer for your reading pleasure were *WACCI, REM, Adventure Probe* and *The Bug.*



LM



Amid the swathes of *LM*'s mixed bag of content – including features on shaving, cycling, buying a used car and AIDS – was Richard Eddy (him again…) summarising the month's top gaming output. The power of absorption was all the rage with Firebird's energy-draining *The Sentinel* receiving all the plaudits.



COMPUTER GAMER



Gilsoft had The Quill, Incentive Software countered with the Graphic Adventure Creator and claimed adventure game making victory was theirs. It certainly looked that way until Gilsoft retaliated with the PAW Professional Adventure Writing system. Which was best? No idea…



CHARTS

APRIL 1987

MUSIC



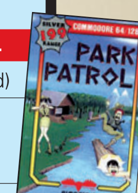
1 Let It Be (Ferry Aid)
2 La Isla Bonita (Madonna)
3 Respectable (Mel & Kim)
4 Lean On Me (Club Nouveau)
5 Let's Wait Awhile (Janet Jackson)

SPECTRUM



1 Olli & Lissa (Firebird)
2 Gauntlet (US Gold)
3 Paperboy (Elite)
4 Agent X (Mastertronic)
5 180 (Mastertronic)

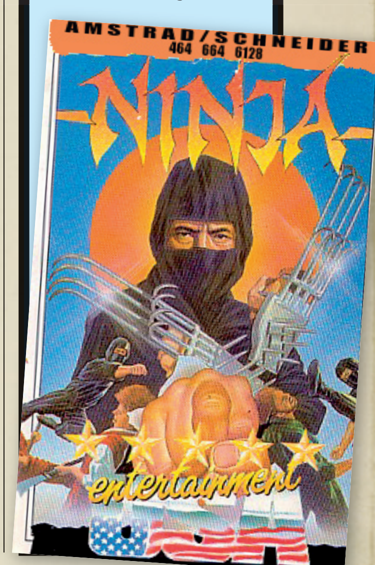
COMMODORE 64



1 Park Patrol (Firebird)
2 Championship Wrestling (Epyx/US Gold)
3 Paperboy (Elite)
4 Gunship (MicroProse)
5 Gauntlet (US Gold)

AMSTRAD

1 Ninja (Mastertronic)
2 Konami Coin-Op Hits (Imagine Software)
3 Gauntlet (US Gold)
4 180 (Mastertronic)
5 Feud (Bulldog)



BACK TO THE NINETIES



THE LATEST NEWS FROM DECEMBER 1991

December 1991 – CDTV reduced, GamesMaster arrives, The Chaos Engine gets stoked, Space Invaders reborn, Dune soon, Paperboy 2 too, Double Dragon III and Dizzy gets compiled. Richard Burton says you can't make an omelette without breaking wind… parp…



» [Amiga] *Double Dragon III: The Rosetta Stone*: A run-of-the-mill arcade game gets a good conversion. Let's kick some shin.



» Patrick Moore as the Games Master. Did he understand a single word he was saying? No chance.



» [PC] *Dune*: An excellent strategy adventure balancing both elements well. Just look out for those sandworms…

In an attempt to entice Christmas shoppers to purchase one of its machines, Commodore dropped the price of its CD ROM entertainment system, the CDTV, by £100. Although a sizeable reduction, the hefty £499 that remained did little to persuade the Christmas punters to part with their wonga.

Channel 4 announced the first series of a new TV programme devoted to the fine art of playing videogames. Premiering on 7 January, the show, entitled *GamesMaster*, featured reviews, hints-and-tips and gaming challenges – complete with Golden Joystick award. The show was hosted by named Dominik Diamond with help from the Games Master, a squinty-eyed fella played by Patrick Moore.

GamesMaster proved a huge success initially, especially since it was aired between the UK launches of Mega Drive and SNES. And Diamond's extensive dictionary of double-entendres helped no end. Diamond presented all but one of the show's seven series, his run punctuated by new presenter Dexter Fletcher in series three. Cor blimey, Guv'nor, strike a light and no mistake… er, big mistake actually.

Gaming legends the Bitmap Brothers were busily working on their latest creation *The Chaos Engine* in the hope of getting it out early in the new year. Although it arrived fashionably late – almost a full year on from the expected release date – it was most certainly worth the wait. Everything in this atmospheric Victorian period piece oozed quality. Its superb graphics and equally stunning music and effects ebbed and flowed with the action. You just couldn't help but be enticed into its mad storyline of bizarre characters and a bonkers baron and his steam-powered computer. *The Chaos Engine*, albeit late, was a shining example of what a shoot-'em-up arcade adventure with RPG overtones could be like on the Amiga and Atari ST.

If in 1991 you were yearning for the good old days of retro gaming (circa 1978 in this case), then you were probably popping out of your pants at the thought of Domark's conversion of the coin-op game, *Super Space Invaders*. Sadly, whereas Taito's original coin-op version was enjoyable and added something to the legacy, the various home micro versions offered nothing new. Granted, there were a few new bells and whistles, such as power ups, to give the impression that some work had gone into the project, but *Space Invaders* had, effectively, been given a quick coat of creosote to give the appearance Domark had freshened it up and revived the old classic. Unfortunately, creosote stinks…

Storm Software had been developing the third instalment of the *Double Dragon* series for The Sales Curve and it was almost ready for a Christmas release. Subtitled *The Rosetta Stone*, the story sees you fight your way through three levels to attain a trio of said stones that would then take you on to the Egyptian levels of the game. Released on the usual 16-bit and 8-bit home micros, as well as Mega Drive and PC, most conversions were on a par with the original arcade release. And therein lies the problem, the coin-op wasn't that much cop either

And the mediocrity continued with Mindscape's conversion of another coin-op game, *Paperboy 2*. The original was immensely playable so quite how Mindscape managed to squander the opportunity to create a fun and interesting sequel is anyone's guess. Among some of the dodgier conversions were the Amiga and Amstrad CPC releases with only the



» [Master System] *Super Kick Off*: "And Burton scores with a diving header from 70 yards." You gotta love homebrew in-game running commentary…



» [Atari ST] *Chuck Rock*: A good solid platform game with dinosaur poo and plenty of Oonga Boonga.



» [Amiga] *The Chaos Engine*: Terrific game made even better by the atmospheric music and developed in-game characters.

1991

DECEMBER NEWS

In a landmark month, the Soviet Union was finally broken up into the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). On 21 December all but one of the 12 Soviet republics signed the CIS treaty, and on Christmas Day Mikhail Gorbachev resigned as President of the USSR. On New Year's Eve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ceased to exist.



» The boy done good. Richard Gere's marriage to Cindy Crawford lasted four years. She went off to start a biscuit company.

The EEC's final negotiations with regard to forming the European Union took place between 9 and 10 December, leading to the formation of a single currency. The treaty was signed in February 1992 in Maastricht.

Premiering across the UK on 13 December was *The Addams Family,* based on the black-and-white Sixties TV series and starring the late Raul Julia as Gomez and Angelica Huston as Morticia. Julia later played General M Bison in *Street Fighter* the movie. Can't win 'em all… Still, it wasn't as stinky as *Suburban Commando,* which premiered on 20 December and starred Hulk Hogan.

And finally, on 12 December actor Richard Gere married supermodel Cindy Crawford. Lucky bleeder…



» Raul Julia played Bison in *Street Fighter: The Travesty.* Still not as bad a Tiny Minogue's Cammy.



» [Amiga] *Magicland Dizzy*: Follow the eggy one through a compilation of six titles, two previously unreleased.





» [Amiga] *Paperboy 2*: Nothing added to the original idea, just more of the same but not as good. Yesterday's news.

Spectrum version managing any respectability.

For purveyors and importers of grey-market games for Super Famicom (until the UK got its official SNES release) the long-awaited release of *Super Castlevania 4* looked to be an event worth getting moist for. When it arrived in the new year it indeed proved a superlative two-dimensional platform game and the best in the series so far.

There would be further importing with news that Sega's spiky blue cash-cow *Sonic The Hedgehog* would be released in Japan on its handheld Game Gear.

Publisher Virgin Games had a trio of games in the production line, although all three missed the lucrative Christmas sales. The 3D arcade adventure game *Corporation* and platform favourite *Chuck Rock*, both originally developed by Core Design, were being converted to Sega's Mega Drive having enjoyed success on the Amiga and Atari ST.

The third game was an unusual mix of point-and-click adventure and strategy game. *Dune*, based on the David Lynch movie – itself an interpretation of the highly regarded science-fiction novel by Frank Herbert – proved a worthy addition to the *Dune* universe with its distinctive ambience that drew you into its world, helped in no small part by the superb music composed by Stéphane Picq.

Dizzy, the 8-bit eggy hero from many a Codemasters game, had also gathered quite a faithful following on the 16-bit machines. To capitalise on the season of goodwill and plentiful disposable income, Codies released a *Dizzy* compilation for Amiga and ST owners, imaginatively entitled *The Dizzy Collection*. It featured six games, two of which – *Magicland Dizzy* and *Kwik Snax* – were previously unreleased, and all for £24.99.

Among the reviews this month, *Computer & Video Games'* reviewing team bestowed the C&VG Hit status upon *Mercs* (Sega, Mega Drive), *First Samurai* (Image Works, Amiga), *Sonic The Hedgehog* (Sega, Master System), *Lotus Turbo Challenge 2* (Gremlin, Amiga), *Super Kick Off* (US Gold, Master System), *Devil Crash* (Techno Soft, Mega Drive) and *Civilization* (MicroProse, PC).

Meanwhile, its sister magazine, *Mean Machines*, awarded just three Mega Game honours, with *John Madden Football '92* (Electronic Arts, Mega Drive), *James Pond 2: Codename Robocod* (Millennium Interactive, Mega Drive) and *Sonic The Hedgehog* (Sega, Master System) receiving praise.

THIS MONTH IN…



ZERO

Bullfrog's Peter Molyneux is interviewed. He reminisces about a *Populous* gaming challenge in Japan, part of a promotional junket he was involved with. He wasn't doing well and, mid-challenge, attempted to invoke the hidden cheat mode incorporated in the game. Japan, honour, cameras – he just couldn't do it…





THE ONE: AMIGA

To celebrate 25 years of *Star Trek*, *The One* took a look at the original TV series and the upcoming anniversary game from Interplay. Should have cranked up the transporters and beamed into a time/space anomaly as it didn't materialise till spring 1994.





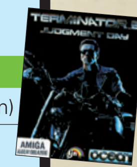
YOUR SINCLAIR

The ongoing Top 100 Spectrum Games Ever feature penned by Sir Stuart of Campbell continues with *Manic Miner* at number 25. Campbell said: "It's still a great game almost nine years later… Come to that, in the year 2000 I'll probably still be playing *Manic Miner*." 2009 and still playing.



CHARTS

DECEMBER 1991



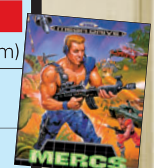
AMIGA

1 Terminator 2 (Ocean)
2 Silent Service 2 (MicroProse)
3 Flight Of The Intruder (Mirrorsoft)
4 Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker (Virgin)
5 Magic Pockets (Renegade)



ATARI ST

1 Magic Pockets (Renegade)
2 Terminator 2 (Ocean)
3 Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker (Virgin)
4 Final Fight (US Gold)
5 Thunderhawk AH-73M (Core Design)



MEGA DRIVE

1 Mercs (Sega/Capcom)
2 Dragon's Fury (Tengen)
3 Toe Jam And Earl (Sega)
4 Road Rash (Electronic Arts)
5 Streets Of Rage (Sega)

MUSIC

1 Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me (George Michael & Elton John)
2 Bohemian Rhapsody (Queen)
3 When You Tell Me That You Love Me (Diana Ross)
4 Justified And Ancient (KLF Featuring Tammy Wynette)
5 Black And White (Michael Jackson)

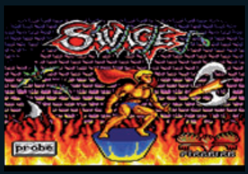


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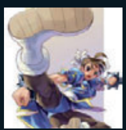
retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL

SAVAGE

SAVAGELY AWESOME



- » **PUBLISHER:** FIREBIRD
- » **RELEASED:** 1988
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** CPC
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



HISTORY

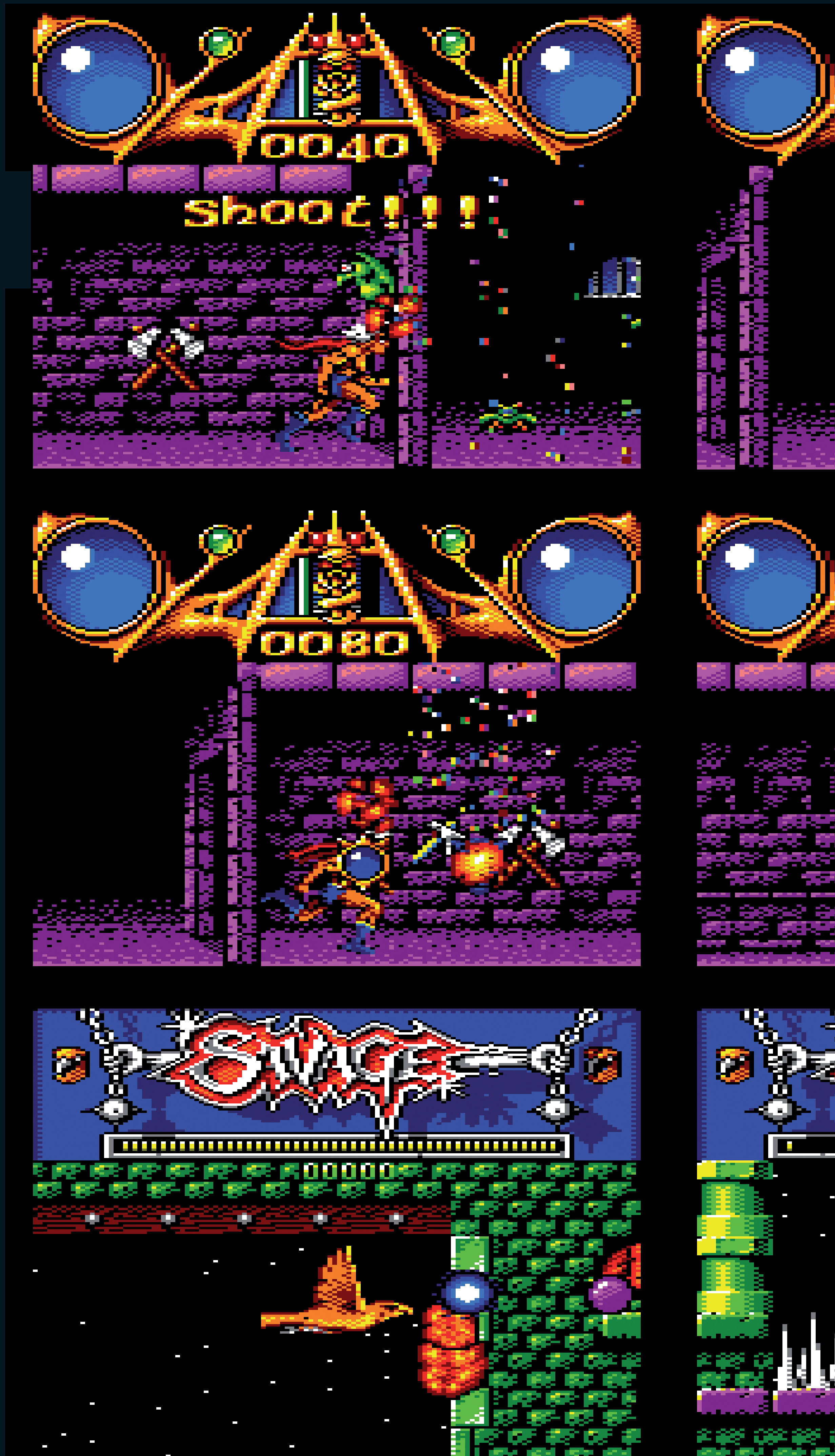
Savage is a compendium of three games in one, and depicts the titular hero's attempt to escape from the castle dungeons. The initial stage is a side-scrolling effort, whereby Savage himself moves from left to right, dispatching his enemies using a variety of weapons. The many opposing forces leave power-ups, weapons, and items that grant our warrior temporary invincibility upon their demise. Progress far enough and a boss character who proves stiff competition appears.

Once his escape is complete, Savage attempts to avoid/shoot the monoliths that want to prevent his ultimate freedom during the second level, which plays out like a colourful version of *Space Harrier*. The difference is that you encounter the action from a first-person viewpoint, rather than from behind.

Finally, upon realising that he left his girlfriend back at the castle (d'oh!), Savage sends his trusty magical eagle to retrieve her. The final level is another side-scrolling effort, but this time you play as the magical eagle who can shoot fiery death from his vengeful beak while trying to locate Savage's imprisoned lady friend.

So far, so predictable. However, what isn't so predictable is the stunning performance of this title on the humble CPC. The action is fast and the scrolling is smooth. Colour oozes from every inch of every stage. The humorous quotes as you progress, together with the meaty sound effects, are really impressive. Dave Perry – of *Earthworm Jim* fame – is the name behind this title, so perhaps we shouldn't be too surprised by the quality of the game. However, who would have thought that, after the push-scrolling abomination of *Green Beret*, CPC owners would be treated to such a spectacle. The ZX Spectrum version isn't too bad either.

Want to appear in the magazine? Then be sure to upload your classic profiles at www.retrogamer.net



RETROBATE PROFILE

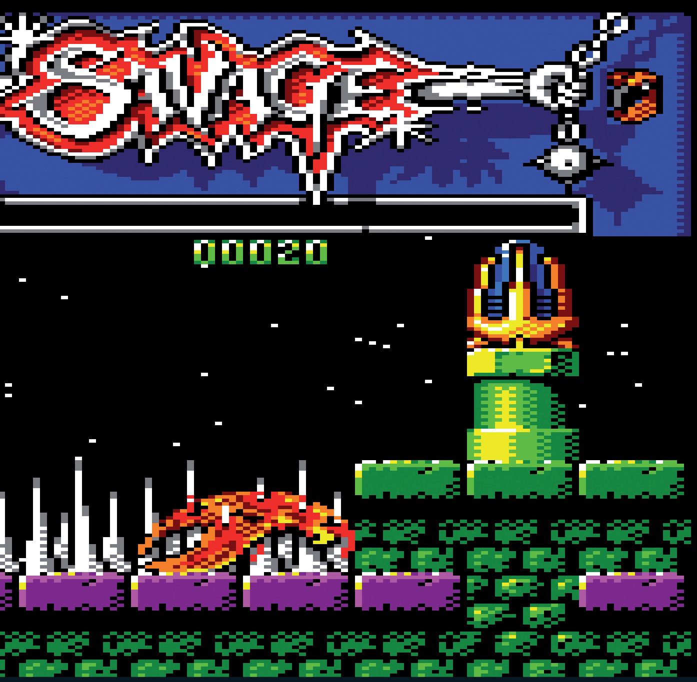
» **NAME:** GAVIN EKE
» **JOINED:** MARCH 2009
» **LOCATION:** NORWICH
» **OCCUPATION:** FINANCE
» **FAVE GAME SYSTEM:** ZX SPECTRUM

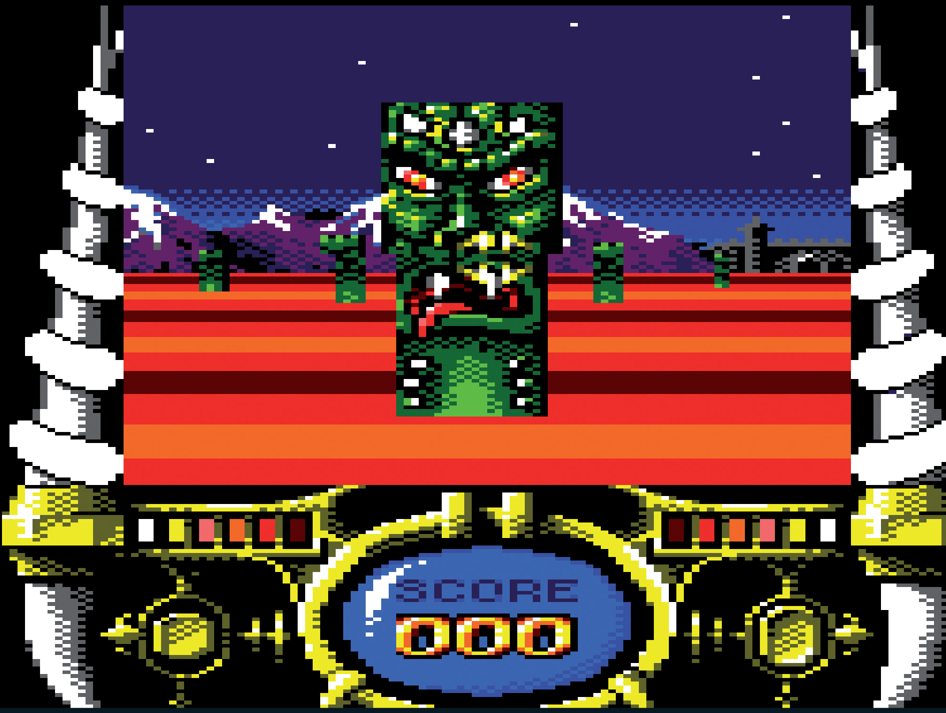












DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

NEVER SPLIT THE PARTY

NEW QUESTS AWAIT YOU, ADVENTURER

The real beauty of *Dungeons & Dragons,* unlike popular MMOs such as *World Of Warcraft* or *City Of Heroes,* is that it is a social game that you can not only play side by side with your friends, but can also shape in a way that MMOs just can't manage. Still, that's hardly surprising when you consider that the classic franchise is now over 30 years old and is played by millions of players around the world. *Dungeons & Dragons* creates a world for you and your friends that is only limited by your own imagination. You don't need to worry about server downtime, you don't have to team up with complete strangers in order to make progress; you're simply free to hang out with your mates and do whatever you want and that's why *Dungeons & Dragons* has remained the most popular RPG, online or otherwise, for over three decades.

The world of *Dungeons & Dragons* never stands still. There are always new races to take up the call to adventure, while a huge selection of new classes are just waiting to be discovered for those brave enough to take up the challenge. Indeed if you have access to additional *D&D* supplements like *Player's Handbook 2,* you'll find no less than five new races and seven new classes for you and your friends to try out, as well as additional supplements that allow you to enhance existing characters or even allow you to create exciting new adventures on the fly.

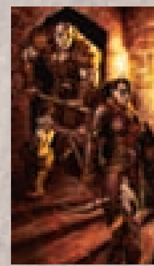
D&D INSIDER

If you love *Dungeons & Dragons,* visit the ever-growing community at www.dndinsider.com. For a monthly subscription fee*, you'll have access to a number of tools to make your life as a player or Dungeon Master much easier. The Character Builder contains the tools and resources to create heroic adventures, from level 1 to 30, while The Ability Generator is a quick way of deciding your character's ability scores. Dungeon Masters can use The Encounter and Monster Builder to plan battles and create scenarios for their players, while both players and Dungeon Masters will benefit from the D&D Compendium's updated rules and easy-to-find stats for all aspects of the game. To top it all, D&D Insider also gives you access to PDFs of the excellent magazines *Dragon* and *Dungeon.* If you're serious about *D&D,* an Insider subscription is essential. Don't forget to sign up to **www.dndnews.com** to receive constant emails about everything that's happening in the UK scene.

*Access is $7.95 per month on a month-to-month basis, or $4.95 per month for a 12-month subscription.

NEW HEROES

Introduced in Players Handbook 2



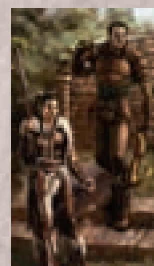
GOLIATH

Everything in life is a sport to the competitive goliaths. Huge in size – they range between seven and eight feet – these tribal nomads are constantly daring and so they favour classes such as the barbarian, fighter and warden.



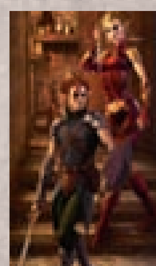
DEVA

Devas are tall, beautiful beings that are reborn whenever they die. They retain many of their past memories and are skilled with all types of magic. Devas are most likely to play avengers, clerics, invokers or wizards.



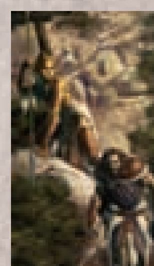
HALF-ORC

Half-orcs are the union between human and orc and tend to be taller and stronger than their human lineage and they are incredibly resourceful. Half-orcs are most likely to be barbarians, fighters, rangers or rogues.



GNOME

Rarely taller than four feet, these tricksters are long-lived, often reaching the age of 300. Boasting an aptitude for magic and technology, gnomes are most likely to play as bards, sorcerers, warlocks or wizards.

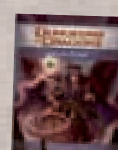


SHIFTER

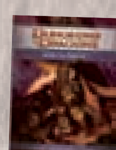
The feral-looking shifter has lycanthropic blood running through its veins. Descended from either werewolves or weretigers, they resemble humans, but sport animalistic traits like pointed ears. They can be dangerous during battle.

FURTHER READING

Enjoy the world of Dungeons & Dragons? Then don't miss these new releases



Arcane Power
If you enjoy playing bards, sorcerers, swordmages, warlocks and wizards, you'll find this new tome essential. It contains everything from new class features to brand new feats and powers.



Martial Power
As with *Arcane Power* this is an additional supplement that contains class features, powers and feats for a variety of different classes. In this case, though, the ones catered for are fighters, rangers, rogues and warlords.



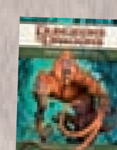
Dungeon Master's Screen
Not a book, but this is nevertheless essential as it not only gives you a screen to hide secrets and developments from the players, but also gives you instant access to essential charts and tables.



Manual Of The Planes
When your heroes have tired of adventuring on their homeworld why not fling them into the planes, where they'll be able to explore a huge selection of dangerous and exciting environments?



Dungeon Delve
Dungeon Delve contains 30 short delves (mini-dungeons) that are perfect for the Dungeon Master who is short on time. It caters to all levels of play as well, meaning there's something for everybody.



Monster Manual 2
The world of *Dungeons & Dragons* is rife with dangerous monsters and mythical beasts and you will find a huge selection of different beasties for your heroes to do battle with.



Dungeons & Dragons Miniatures
These handy booster boxes come in two sets: one with visable player characters, the other, for monsters, has one visable and four random monsters.

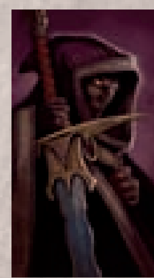
GET MORE AT D&D INSIDER
www.dndinsider.com

FORGET MMOS, THIS IS THE REAL DEAL

Exploring online is all well and good, but you can't beat adventuring with friends

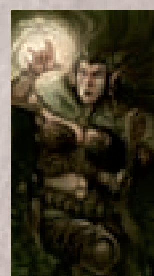


AVENGER



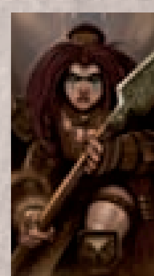
An avenger is specifically trained to strike out in the name of its god. Avengers are highly tuned to destroy the enemies that oppose or threaten their faith. Avengers use both weapons and divine magic to combat their foes.

DRUID



Druids thrive in the wilderness and enjoy being at one with nature. As well as being able to channel their primal energy into the form of an animal, they also have access to powerful primal energy that can smite their foes.

SHAMAN

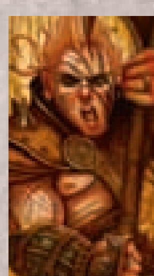


Shamans are leaders who use their magical powers to aid their allies and followers. Finely in tune with the spirit world, they are never found without their companion spirit, which can take the form of any animal.

A CLASS OF THEIR OWN

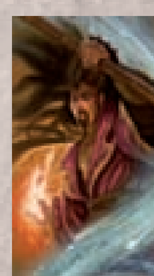
Introduced in Players Handbook 2

BARBARIAN



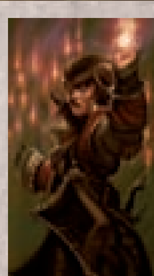
Barbarians are strong savage warriors who relish a good old battle. Linked to powerful nature spirits and possessing a primal connection to the natural world, they favour Charisma, Strength and Wisdom.

SORCERER



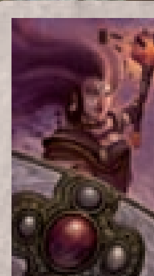
Wild and unpredictable, sorcerers are the opposite of studious wizards and use their bodies, instead of the knowledge found in books, to harness their deadly spells. They have access to either Dragon or Wild magic.

BARD

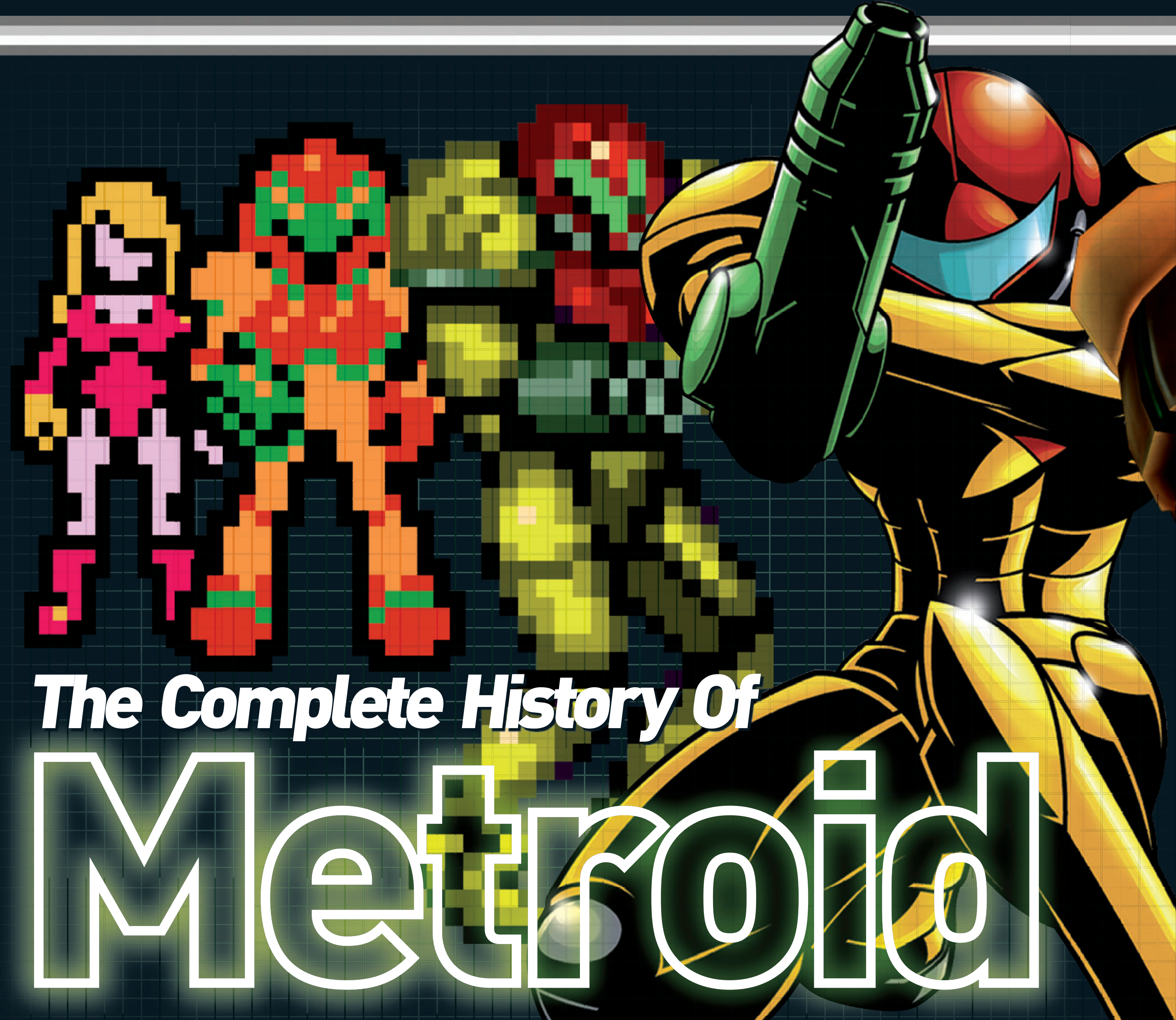


Bards love magic almost as much as they love the finest of arts. They constantly strive to learn new things and it is not unknown for bards to master many different languages or to discover secret, long-forgotten lore.

WARDEN



Wardens share the traits of rangers and druids and use their powers to oppose anyone who attacks the resources of the natural world. They can change into the form of a bear or tree spirit in order to further champion their cause.



The Complete History Of Metroid

With this month's exclusive making of Super Metroid and the recent announcement that the Metroid Prime trilogy is heading to the Wii, Stuart Hunt looks back at the pioneering adventures of Nintendo's first lady

Nintendo hasn't always waved the 'family fun' flag as vehemently as it does today. Indeed, upon its release, Metroid stood out from the kid-friendly titles of the mid-Eighties. Nintendo's push into the children's market only really began later with the introduction of the Super Nintendo, which we suspect had a lot to do with the fact that Sega was grooming the Mega Drive to appeal more to adult gamers. In varying capacities and over several console wars, Nintendo clearly strove to uphold the family-based image it had carved for itself, but when it chose to dip its toes in 'adult' gaming waters, with *Metroid,* Nintendo proved it could do so with aplomb.

The *Metroid* saga begins in 1965 when, shortly after completing his degree in electronics at the Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan, a young Gunpei Yokoi joined Nintendo. After a period dabbling with playing cards and electronic toys, Nintendo set its sights on the coin-op market and made Yokoi instrumental in spearheading that transition. While his name became synonymous with Nintendo's most successful hardware creations, including Game & Watch, Nintendo Famicom, Game Boy, and the company's most high-profile failure the Virtual Boy, the Nintendo technician in those fledgling years also oversaw some of Nintendo's earliest Famicom and coin-op titles, and *Metroid* is one of his most popular creations.

The game surfaced on Nintendo's Japan-only Famicom Disk System on 6 August 1986. The external disk drive that connected to the machine's cartridge slot ran off three-inch floppy diskettes. At the time of *Metroid's* release, the new-fangled add-on was struggling to strike a chord with Famicom owners, but with the extra storage capacity the disks offered, Nintendo knew it had the means to create two epic adventure games for its machine and hopefully turn the system's fortunes around. First up to bat was *The Legend Of Zelda*, and second was *Metroid* six months later.

At that time, it was fair to assume Nintendo didn't have a hard or fast plan for how best to market Famicom or its Western counterpart the NES. It would have been foolish to release only cute, kiddie titles on the machine and alienate potential older gamers so early in the console's life, and with games such as *Casino Kid*, *Mad Max*, *Friday The 13th*, *Nightmare On Elm Street* and *Sweet Home* appearing on the system, Nintendo fully understood this. Only with retrospect can we appreciate *Metroid* as a unique Nintendo game. Still, in terms of gameplay and design it was trailblazing, ambitious,



Leading Ladies

Samus may have been the first strong lead female character in a videogame, but she certainly wasn't the last. Just check out these memorable leading ladies. Easy, gents…

JOANNA DARK
FIRST APPEARED IN: PERFECT DARK

Rare's spiritual successor to its hit smash *GoldenEye* upped the ante in every department. Aside from tweaking the game engine and refining the multiplayer, Rare also ditched one special agent for another. Bond became a distant memory as feisty brunette – later turned redhead – Joanna Dark squeezed into a tiny cat suit and became a pin-up for N64 owners the world over.

TYRIS FLARE
FIRST APPEARED IN: GOLDEN AXE

Tyris Flare makes up the party of three characters in Sega's swords-and-spells beat-'em-up *Golden Axe*. She takes the form of an Amazonian woman in a red-and-silver bikini who wields a sword. Her look seems to be based on Briggite Nielsen's character Red Sonja in the film of the same name. Like Samus, Tyris is also an orphan looking to exact revenge on her parents' killers.

LARA CROFT
FIRST APPEARED IN: TOMB RAIDER

When Lara swung onto our screens in 1996, the reaction was unprecedented. The genesis of the 3D platform adventure game was one thing, but a frisky camera paired with a tomb-raiding socialite with triangular boobs was something else altogether.

PRINCESS PEACH
FIRST APPEARED IN: SUPER MARIO BROS

Peach (aka Princess Toadstool) is the perpetual kidnap victim in the *Super Mario Bros* series. While that might not read like the characteristic of a strong female character, over the years, in appearances like *Super Mario Bros 2*, the *Mario Kart* franchise, and *Super Princess Peach* (in which the tables are turned and she has to save the plumbers), she became quite the heroine.



ALYX VANCE
FIRST APPEARED IN: HALF-LIFE 2

The witty, pretty, resourceful and intelligent Alyx Vance sits high on our list of great female videogame characters. Very much the girl-next-door type, she helps us out of a few scrapes yet also shows us the gentle and fragile side of her character. The only drawback is DOG, her robotic bodyguard capable of ripping the guts from a Stalker quicker than Gordon Freeman can work out the principal square root of nine.

SONYA BLADE
FIRST APPEARED IN: MORTAL KOMBAT

Sonya Blade isn't the sexiest-looking female character ever designed. In fact, she kind of looks like she's just stepped out of the gym and is about to buy a Frappuccino from the nearest Starbucks. However, as a member of the US Special Forces and with lips that can kill, she's not someone you really want to mess with.

CHUN-LI
FIRST APPEARED IN: STREET FIGHTER II: THE WORLD WARRIOR

Basically, there's not a man under the age of 30 who doesn't know the command for a Spinning Star Kick. The leggy Chun-Li was the original 16-bit videogame pin-up and a firm favourite among both male and female beat-'em-up fans. Working for Interpol, she's on the case to bring down the crime syndicate responsible for murdering her father. Can anyone see a pattern emerging?

JILL VALENTINE
FIRST APPEARED IN: RESIDENT EVIL

The STARS operative with big pockets and a firearm from the outset became the first choice for many gamers on their first *Resident Evil* playthrough. You see, Capcom ingeniously made the difficulty of the game representative of its two central characters – the female Jill making the mission slightly easier. She's since become one of the series' most popular characters.

> "In terms of story, Metroid is far darker than any other Nintendo series"

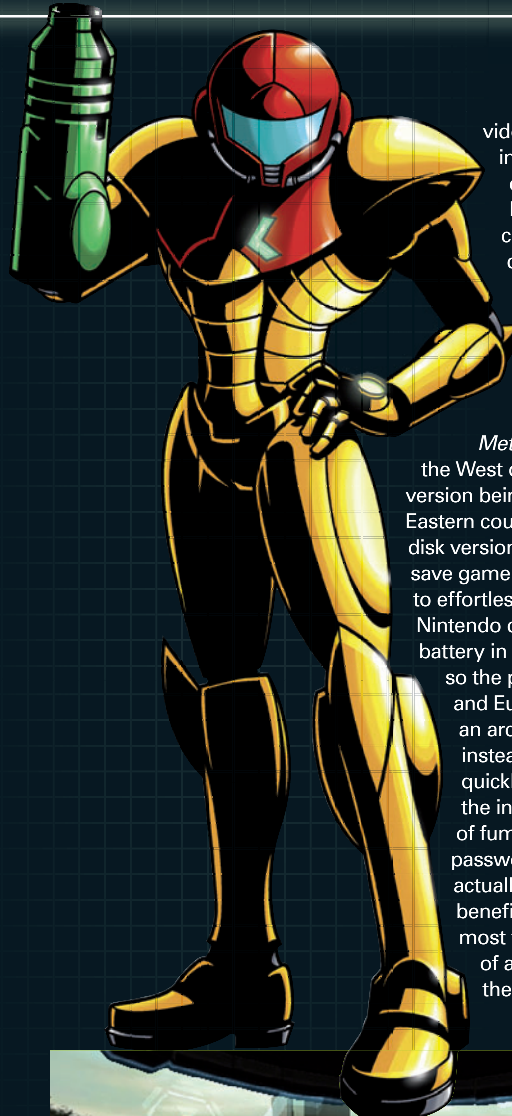


» Yoshio has been behind nearly all of the *Metroid* titles, and speaks to us this issue about the making of *Super Metroid* on page 58.

and, like its floppy stable-mate *Zelda*, offered console owners the then-unprecedented opportunity to explore the wonders of open-world environments.

Perhaps the reason *Metroid* shares none of the chirpiness so piquant in later Nintendo titles is that Shigeru Miyamoto, the brainchild behind much of Nintendo's more childlike characters – including Donkey Kong, Mario and Yoshi – had no involvement in its creation. Arguably, his only contribution to the original *Metroid* was the hiring of designer Yoshio Sakamoto, who worked alongside Yokoi as director of the game. That, and Miyamoto's signature design style of course. It's rumoured Sakamoto was looking to make a name for himself at Nintendo and felt the best way to do so was to create games that were unique and atypical of those being made by Miyamoto and his team Entertainment Analysis and Development (EAD). So, with the help of Yokoi, composer Hirokazu 'Hip' Tanaka, character and scenario designer Makoto Kanoh, and Hiroji Kiyotake, who is credited with designing Samus Aran, Sakamoto set about making a game in strong contrast to Miyamoto's style.

When breaking down *Metroid's* theme, it's clear from where the game drew inspiration. As fans know, Ridley Scott's sci-fi classic *Alien* played a big part in the look and style of *Metroid*. The game's grotesque alien designs look amazingly similar to HR Giger's classic creatures, and the levels share the bleak isolated appearance of the film sets. Moreover, the game's protagonist, Samus Aran, is a strong female central lead, much like Sigourney Weaver's character, Ripley, in the film. The revelation that Samus was female shocked fans in 1986. Placed in context, however, it was a first for a home videogame series, and a revelation that was only revealed if the player escaped the self-destruct sequence within a strict time limit following the final confrontation with Mother Brain. The game even throws up a red herring by referring to Samus as a he in the game manual, although discrepancies between



videogames and their instruction manuals are commonplace, so little can be read into that. As you can imagine, few people discovered the gender bender, only learning the truth five years later with the release of *Metroid II* on Game Boy.

Given its *Alien*-inspired story and look, *Metroid* became a huge hit in the West despite the US cartridge version being slightly inferior to its Eastern counterpart. Whereas the disk version featured an internal save game function enabling fans to effortlessly save their progress, Nintendo decided not to include a battery in the US cartridges and so the poor gamers in America and Europe were left to use an archaic password system instead. However, as fans quickly discovered, despite the initial inconvenience of fumbling with pen and password, the save system actually brought with it its own benefits and led to one of the most famous videogame cheats of all time. When inputted, the fabled 'Justin Bailey' password code enabled players to start the game with an entirely different-looking Samus: de-suited and complete with moss-green hair (though the games depict her as a blonde), a bright pink leotard and armed to the back teeth with power ups. However, as the internal makeup between the Famicom and NES differ slightly – NES being the lesser of the two machines, with fewer peripherals, region lockout and substandard sound output – Tanaka's wonderful atmospheric score suffered slightly in the US translation.

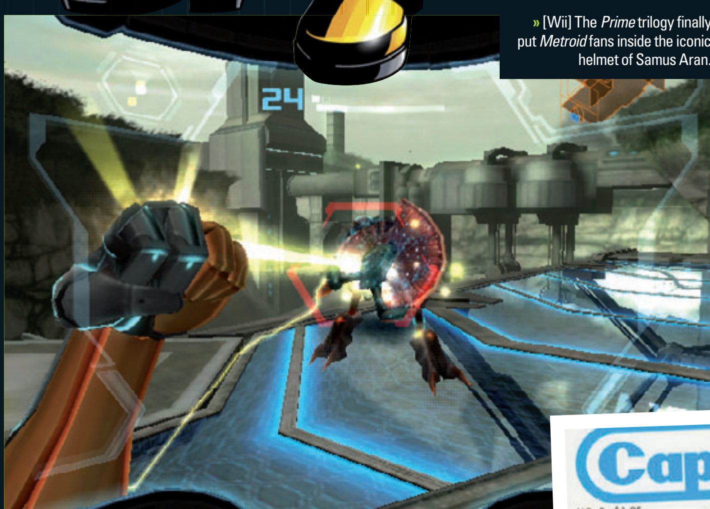
In terms of story, *Metroid* is far darker than any other Nintendo series. *Metroid* follows the tale of an orphaned bounty hunter known as Samus Aran, who, throughout most of the games, is concealed inside red-and-gold armour known as the Power Suit. In her first appearance in the original Famicom title, her skinny limbs, large spaceship-like head and ability to roll into a ball almost gave her the look and feel of a robotic bipedal insect – light years away from the pretty young woman hidden within. In later games we discover that the suit is the creation of a peaceful bird-like alien species called the Chozo who helped raise Samus after her parents were killed by pterodactyl creature, and leader of the space pirates, Ridley. Now a bounty hunter, Samus has devoted her life to the enslaving of space pirates and the destruction of the energy-sapping parasites known as Metroids.

While *Metroid* feels a little primitive by today's standards, when returning to the game you'll recognise the strong formula for which the series is now renowned. A template of multi-faceted gunplay, wonderful adventure and platforming gameplay, and a gripping narrative have helped the series endure for over 20 years and gain a passionate legion of Nintendo fans. And that's not all: the *Metroid* gameplay has since gone on to inspire the direction of many other popular videogame franchises – most notably *Castlevania*. The classic 1997 PlayStation title *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* spawned the portmanteau 'Metroidvania' as an umbrella term for all the *Castlevania* titles that adhere to *Metroid*-style gameplay.

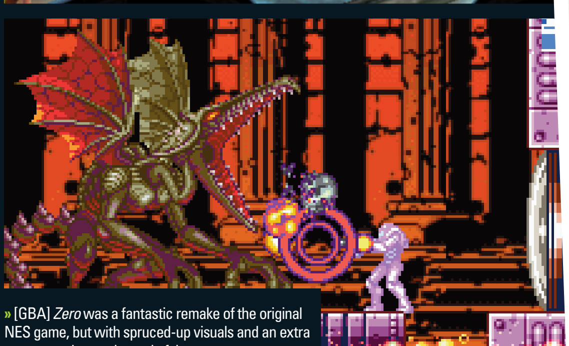
Fans had all but forgotten *Metroid* by the time Nintendo finally released a Game Boy sequel five years later. And although *Metroid II: Return Of Samus* did garner numerous plaudits and critical acclaim, the public seemed less enamoured with Samus's portable outing.

As well as appearing on a new console, *Metroid II* was also developed by a new dev team: Hiroyuki Kimura and original character designer Hiroji Kiyotake both took to the director's chair. It's rumoured that at this time Yoshio Sakamoto chose to take a back seat from the series while he focused his attention on bringing together the right team and story for Samus's Super Nintendo debut.

But back to *Metroid II*. The story this time centres on Samus travelling to the Metroid home planet SR-388 to defeat the Metroid Queen. In terms of gameplay – probably in order to suit the attributes and technical limitations of Game Boy – *Metroid II* is far more linear, which many fans found difficult to accept. The game features hardly any exploration, Samus's goal being to simply hunt and eradicate a preset number of Metroids in order to progress. Augmenting the game's emphasis on action, Samus herself is bestowed with a bevy of new weaponry, and, when in her 'ball' state, gains wall-crawling abilities. Also, to compensate for Game Boy's black-and-white display, the Samus Varia Suit was also rethought slightly. At certain points during the game, Samus needs to switch between two different suits, so her Varia Suit had to be made distinguishable by design and not colour. This explains the



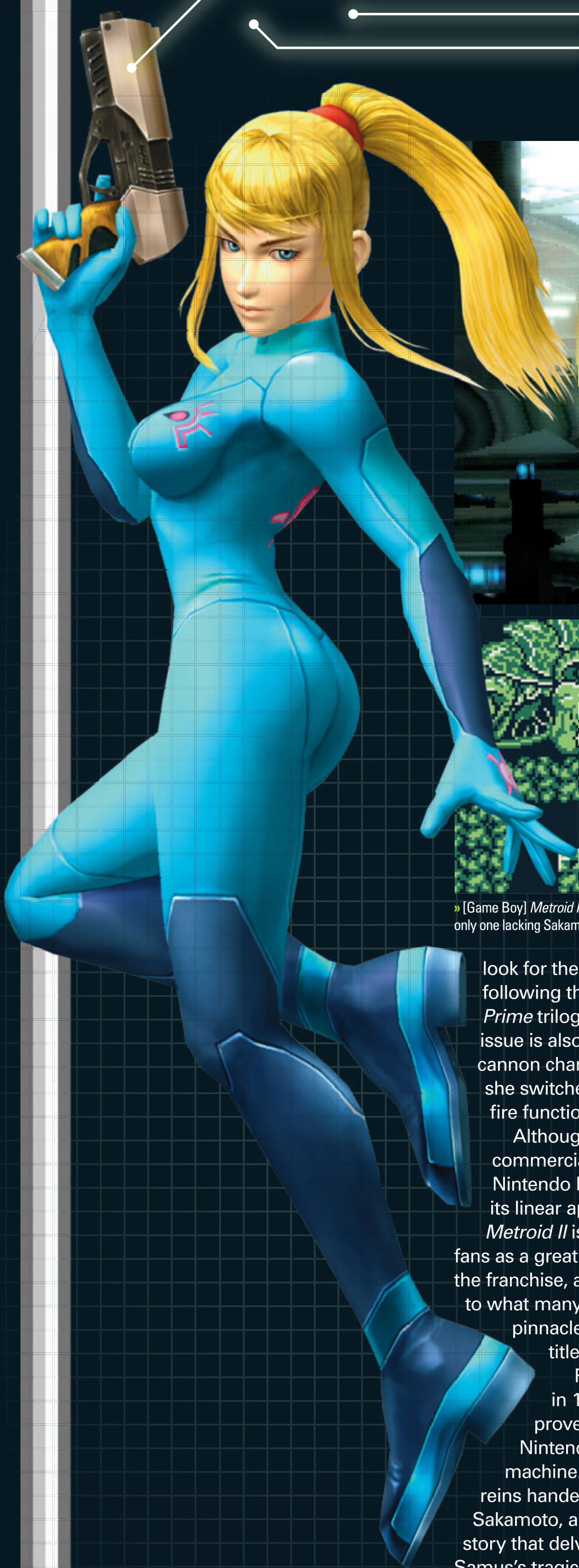
» [Wii] The *Prime* trilogy finally put *Metroid* fans inside the iconic helmet of Samus Aran.



» [GBA] *Zero* was a fantastic remake of the original NES game, but with spruced-up visuals and an extra area tagged on to the end of the game.









» [Wii] The attention to detail in *Corruption* is staggering, check out the visor.



» [Game Boy] *Metroid II: Return Of Samus*, is the first portable *Metroid* game and the only one lacking Sakamoto's involvement.

look for the suit and Samus herself following the popularity of the *Prime* trilogy. The monochrome issue is also why Samus's arm cannon changes shape whenever she switches between its various fire functions.

Although it wasn't as commercially successful as Nintendo had hoped, and despite its linear approach to gameplay, *Metroid II* is now considered by fans as a great handheld debut for the franchise, and a tasty appetiser to what many would consider the pinnacle of the series: the aptly titled *Super Metroid*.

Released for SNES in 1994, *Super Metroid* proved another hit for Nintendo and its new 16-bit machine. With the directorial reins handed back over to Sakamoto, and the fantastic story that delves a little more into Samus's tragic past, not to mention the impressive grunt of the new console, meant the stage was set for a return to form for the series. Following on directly from the events of *Metroid II*, *Super Metroid* followed Samus's mission to hunt down her arch-nemesis Ridley, who has fled the newly rebuilt planet Zebes with the last remaining Metroid. *Super Metroid's* gameplay recalled the labyrinthine caverns and open-world gameplay of the original, only decorated with lavish colour palettes, detailed sprite work, and some extremely smooth SNES animation.

Once again the series placed its emphasis on exploration, only this time inside screens teeming with secrets and hidden rooms to explore. And like *Metroid II*, far more consideration was given over to Samus's weapons and suit abilities through various upgrades, which not only played a part of the gunplay, but also in the puzzle solving. And to round everything off nicely, Nintendo also introduced a roster of memorable villains for Samus to face as well as a return for the screen-smothering Mother Brain and Ridley.

Featuring on the box art, Ridley is a character Sakamoto was hoping *Metroid* fans would most embrace, pulling out all the stops to make him integral to the story. At the start of the game, Samus arrives on Zebes, where she discovers Ridley has broken into the research facility, killed all the scientists, and stolen the last remaining Metroid, which, at the finale of *Metroid II*, she decided to save and mother – yet more *Alien* plot similarities. When Samus finally confronts Ridley at the base, after a quick fight he flees the facility with the Metroid in tow, leaving Samus mere minutes to escape before the entire place explodes. It's an epic and memorable lead into the game and remains an iconic SNES moment.

With an estimated 2 million copies sold worldwide, *Super Metroid* was unlike anything else on SNES, and with Nintendo riding high on a wave of success after the likes of *Super Mario World*, *F-Zero*, *Pilotwings* and *A Link To The Past*, SNES owners were eagerly waiting to snap up the next title to come charging from the publisher's stable. Looking like no other Nintendo game of its time served the game well as it stood out from the crowd, and when the positive magazine reviews started flooding in and word spread of its brilliance, the series' popularity skyrocketed. But once again *Metroid* fans were forced to wait patiently before Samus resurfaced.

It still amazes many fans that *Metroid* never got a Nintendo 64

"Sakamoto felt the best way to [make a name for himself] was to create games that were unique"

release. After all, *Mario*, *Star Fox*, and even *Pilotwings* enjoyed 64-bit sequels, so why not *Metroid*? Perhaps the reasons lie with the hazy internal goings-on at Nintendo at the time. Following the commercial failure of Virtual Boy, Gunpei Yokoi resigned from Nintendo and started up his own company, Koto Laboratory, before his tragic death in a road accident in 1997. With no leader at the helm of R&D1, it's possible the *Metroid* series was put on a long hiatus while Miyamoto and Nintendo focused on their new console and also decided what to do with the *Metroid* franchise. Supporting this idea is Nintendo's decision to hand the series over to American developer Retro Studios, a brave move that could have proved devastating for *Metroid*.

Fans were concerned upon hearing that *Metroid* was going 3D, skipping a console war, and being handled by an external studio in the US. However, their fears were allayed when they learned that Sakamoto would be joined by Miyamoto in what marked his first direct involvement in the series. Despite being a colossal eight years in the making, the eventual game that came from this partnership was another glorious high for the series. Although it shirked numerous deadlines and was rumoured to have had a catalogue of issues during development, *Metroid Prime*, released for GameCube in 2002, was a perfect 3D debut for the franchise.

Metroid Prime marks a significant change in the series. Not only is the game 3D, but it's also played from a first-person perspective. Interestingly, it's widely reported that the first-person shooter idea was suggested by Miyamoto himself. Disappointed with Retro Studios' efforts and the game's camera, he apparently ordered the developer to rethink the game, suggesting the action be played through the eyes of Samus herself and that the various suits be represented by coloured visors. The first-person shooter approach meant the attention to detail of the helmet's HUD had to be astonishing, and to Retro Studios' credit they did a great job of making you feel like you're actually inside Samus's Power Suit – even when she did her ball-morphing routine and the game switched to third person.

Prime, it seemed, had everything covered. And yet despite the bold change in perspective and the jaw-dropping visuals, what really made *Prime* so impressive was just how well the open-world gameplay of *Metroid* and *Super Metroid* had been carried across to 3D and the FPS genre. Such freedom was practically unheard of in the genre, in console games at least. Players could finally immerse themselves in the freakish world of *Metroid*, get inside the head of their heroine and get up close and personal with the game's monsters. *Prime* was well received by both the gaming press and *Metroid* fans in its day. In a time of less-than-perfect Nintendo titles, such as *Super Mario Sunshine*, *Star Fox Adventures* and *Mario Kart Double Dash!!*, *Prime* stood out as the best GameCube game from Nintendo. And for a period, in the West at least, it was Nintendo's most important title.

Given that the series was hitting the height of its popularity in 2002, it should come as no surprise that *Metroid* saw no less than five more games appear on various Nintendo consoles within the following four years. The first of these was *Metroid Fusion*, which was actually released the same year as *Prime*. While *Metroid* director Yoshio Sakamoto helped guide Retro Studios during

Hunter for Hire

Over the years, Samus hasn't just appeared in Metroid games. Oh no – her face has graced a number of titles, and not just in Nintendo games. Here are a few of our favourites...



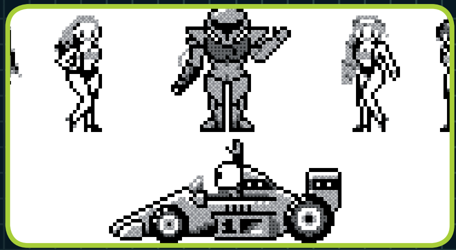
SUPER SMASH BROS

Samus has appeared in all three of the *Super Smash Bros* games. In *Super Smash Bros Brawl*, however, she can appear in six alternative suits, including her Zero Suit form, where she ditched the tacky pink leotard for a fetching blue jumpsuit.



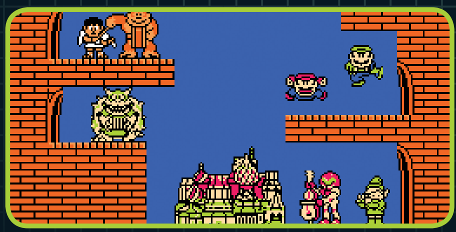
SUPER MARIO RPG

In *Super Mario RPG*, Samus can be seen tucked up in bed inside Mushroom Kingdom's guest room, wearing her suit, which we find a little weird. Anyway, when Mario attempts to talk to her, she replies "I'm resting up for Mother Brain".



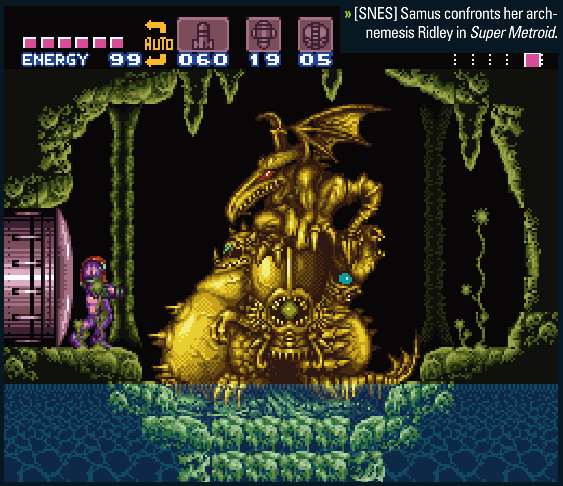
F1 RACE

This early Game Boy racer features cameos from a whole host of Nintendo superstars. When you win a race, the game flashes up with a celebration screen showing either Mario, Peach, Bowser, Zelda, Toad or Samus waving at you, which is jolly nice of them.

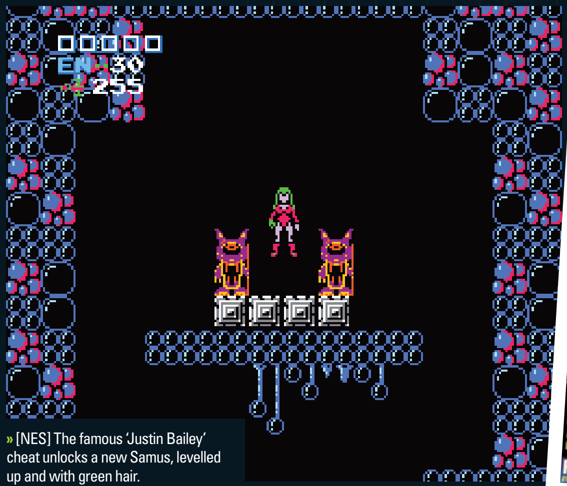


NINTENDO TETRIS

In *Tetris* for NES, another team of Nintendo characters show up to congratulate you – this time for your block-stacking ability. It's a weird image: Mario looks miffed, Link looks like a gnome, DK's wearing a cravat, and Samus is playing a cello.

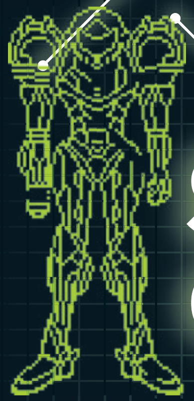


» [SNES] Samus confronts her arch-nemesis Ridley in *Super Metroid*.



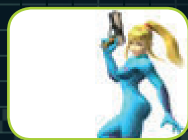
» [NES] The famous 'Justin Bailey' cheat unlocks a new Samus, levelled up and with green hair.





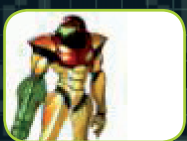
Suits you… er, madam

ZERO SUIT



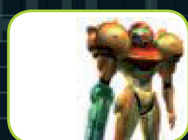
The Zero Suit is the blue jumpsuit Samus wears beneath her Power Suit. Fans first got to see the costume in *Metroid: Zero Mission* on GBA after successfully defeating Mother Brain. The game then continues with a de-suited Samus. In her Zero Suit, she is obviously more agile but much less guarded against attacks.

POWER SUIT



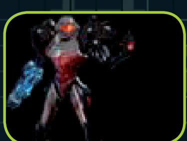
The Power Suit is Samus's standard upgradeable suit and is the one she starts out with in the first *Metroid* game. The suit is said to have been created by the Chozo, a bird-like alien race that helped raise Samus following her parents' death at the hands of the nefarious space pirate leader Ridley.

VARIA SUIT



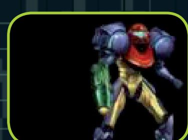
Making its first appearance in *Metroid* where it changed the Power Suit to a purplish colour, and changing shape in *Metroid II: Return Of Samus* – it has large shoulder pads – the Varia suit offers Samus far better protection from enemy attacks and extreme environmental conditions. Following *Prime*, it is now her most iconic garb.

PHAZON SUIT



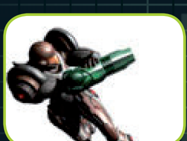
An upgrade for the Power Suit found in *Metroid Prime*, the Phazon Suit consists of a radioactive substance that smothers Samus's outfit. The Phazon Suit offers additional protection against damage and also makes Samus immune from the radiation given off by certain strains of Phazon.

GRAVITY SUIT



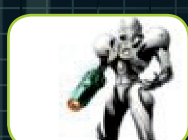
Another upgrade for the Power Suit is the Gravity Suit. As its name quite rightly suggests, this armour offers Samus enhanced agility – even in water. The Gravity Suit also brings with it the benefit of slightly more protection than the Varia Suit. This outfit's first appearance was in *Super Metroid*.

DARK SUIT



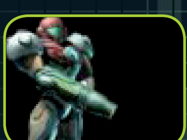
The Dark Suit made its debut in *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes* and is the first suit upgrade that Samus acquires in the game. The Dark Suit's chief property is that it lessens the damage taken by the health-depleting Dark Vapours of Dark Aether's atmosphere. A very handy item to have in your wardrobe.

LIGHT SUIT



As you can see, the Light Suit has a much sleeker appearance than the others. Not only does it allow Samus to pass safely through storms of Ing particles in *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes*, but it also enables her to travel on Light Shafts to quickly move around the different areas of the game.

PED SUIT



Following the events of *Prime*, the Phazon Enhancement Device (PED) Suit was built especially for Samus so that she could safely harness and use the radioactive substance Phazon. In the game, the PED Suit allows her to go into a 'hyper mode' but at the cost of a slab of energy.

FUSION SUIT



The Fusion Suit is the bizarre result of Samus being forced to bond with a Metroid in order to save her life after she contracted an X Parasite infection. The Fusion Suit is actually notably weaker than the Power Suit, but it does allow Samus to climb walls and pull herself up onto ledges.

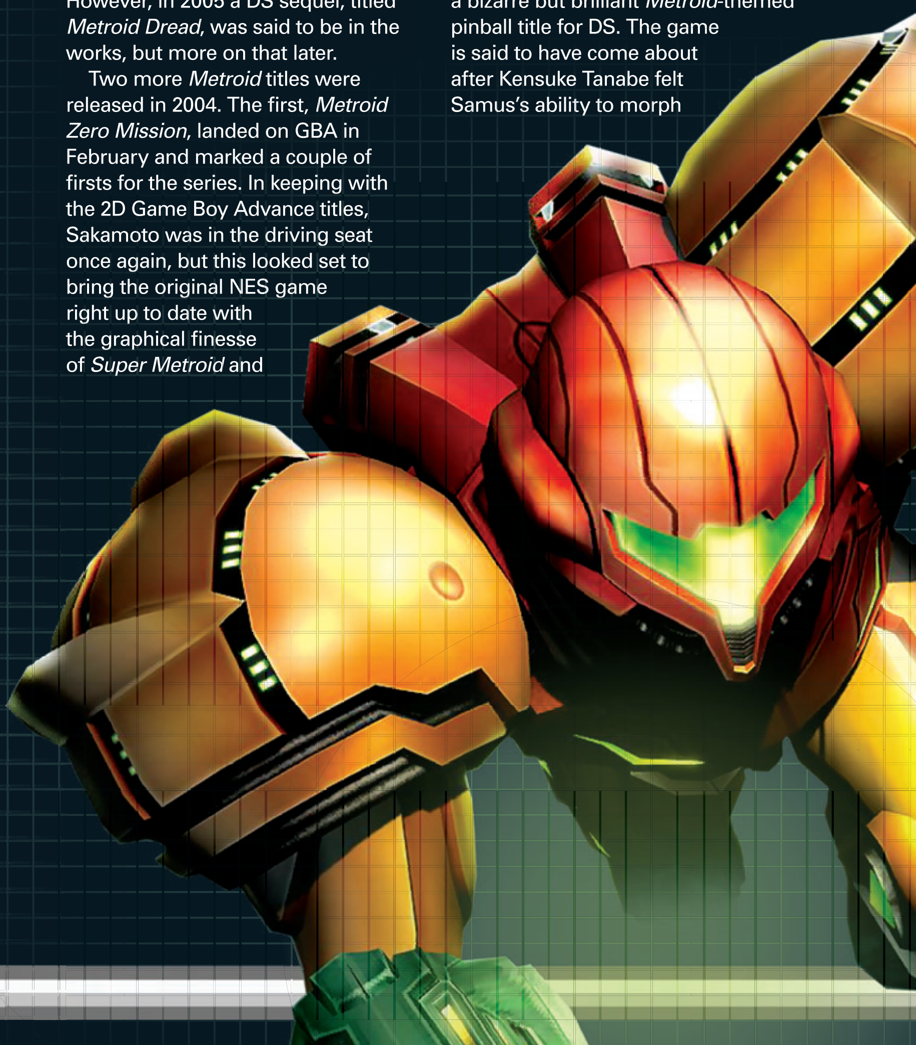
the development of *Metroid*'s first three-dimensional outing, he had also longed to create a true follow-up to his magnum opus *Super Metroid*. Of course, he was keen to continue the story in two dimensions, which left him no option but to develop the sequel, titled *Metroid Fusion* (aka *Metroid IV*) for Nintendo's then-newest handheld Game Boy Advance. *Fusion* may have been the creation of *Metroid* stalwart Sakamoto, but the gameplay is more akin to the style and gameplay of *Metroid II*. In fact, the game is probably even more accessible and more linear due to the fact that Samus is joined by a computer aide called Adam – said to be a robotic replicant of Samus's old commanding officer – and progression is mission based, which nullifies any sense of exploration.

The story details how Samus is forced to fuse with the Metroid she's been fostering after returning to SR-388 and becoming infected by a deadly parasite. The result of this fusion gives Samus all-new Metroid abilities and a new underpowered suit: the Fusion Suit, which is less powerful than the standard Power Suit but does offer added agility. Presently, *Fusion* is the final *Metroid* game in terms of story chronology. However, in 2005 a DS sequel, titled *Metroid Dread*, was said to be in the works, but more on that later.

Two more *Metroid* titles were released in 2004. The first, *Metroid Zero Mission*, landed on GBA in February and marked a couple of firsts for the series. In keeping with the 2D Game Boy Advance titles, Sakamoto was in the driving seat once again, but this looked set to bring the original NES game right up to date with the graphical finesse of *Super Metroid* and *Metroid Fusion*. *Zero Mission* is a fantastic remake of the original NES game that makes wonderful use of all the extra power inside its new host console. It also has one rather special ace up its sleeve for fans: once Samus defeats Mother Brain, the game continues to reveal an extra section that allows the player to control Samus in her Zero Suit, which is basically just a blue jumpsuit.

Following the release of *Metroid: Zero Mission*, attention returned to the GameCube after Retro Studios released its three-dimensional follow-up to *Prime* the following November. *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes* was another excellent title only really let down by its disappointing multiplayer deathmatch section. Apart from that, the gameplay remained pretty much untouched from *Prime*. Retro Studios added some new enemies – most notably Dark Samus – two new Power Suits (Dark and Light), and a unique dark and light element to the gameplay courtesy of the new setting, planet Aether.

Echoes retained the same level of quality of *Prime*, but sadly failed to garner the same level of sales at retail. And being released shortly after the launch of *Halo 2* certainly didn't help. Following the release of *Echoes* was a bizarre but brilliant *Metroid*-themed pinball title for DS. The game is said to have come about after Kensuke Tanabe felt Samus's ability to morph

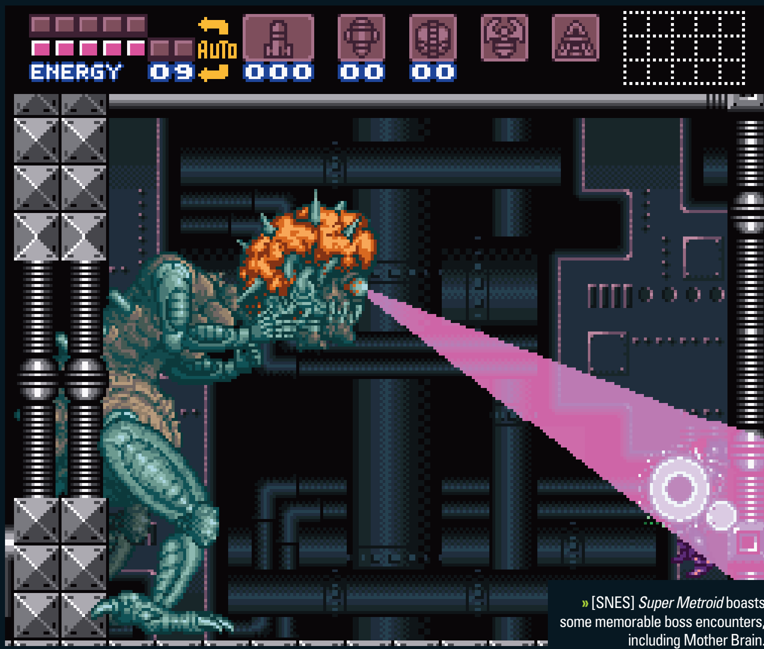






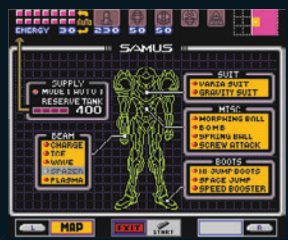


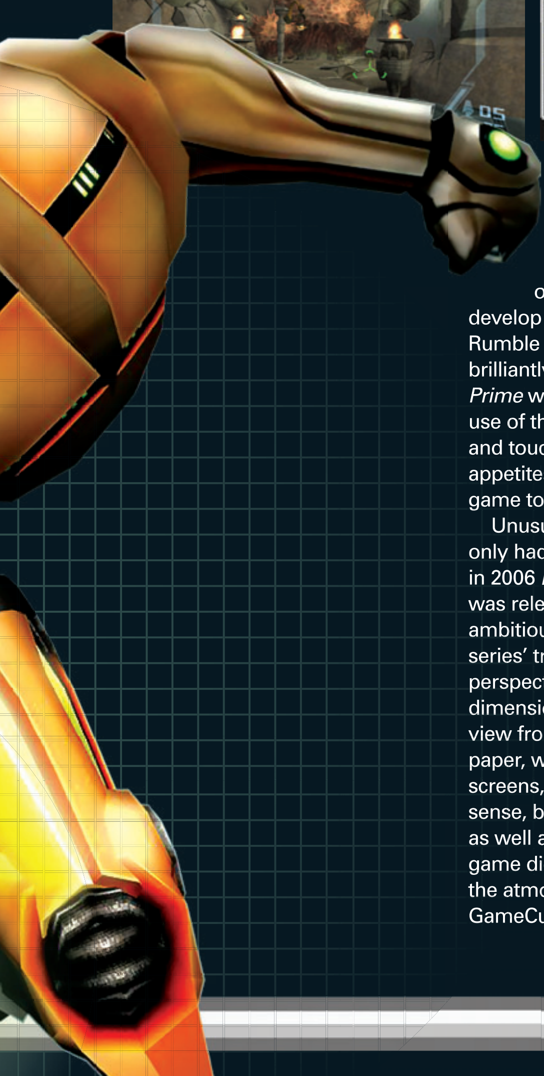
» [Wii] Samus made appearances in all three *Smash Bros* games, a sign of how much love Nintendo has for the character.



» [SNES] *Super Metroid* boasts some memorable boss encounters, including Mother Brain.







> "We're convinced Nintendo's most un-Nintendo series will continue to live up to its legacy"

into a ball would lend itself to a pinball spin-off. He approached UK developer Fuse Games, who worked on *Mario Pinball Land*, to develop the idea. Packed with the DS Rumble Pak, *Metroid Prime Pinball* brilliantly fuses the world of *Metroid Prime* with pinball. It also makes great use of the handheld's dual screens and touch-sensitive abilities, whetting appetites for the first 'proper' *Metroid* game to appear on the system.

Unusually for *Metroid*, DS fans only had to wait a year because in 2006 *Metroid Prime Hunters* was released. Nintendo and Retro ambitiously dropped the handheld series' traditional 2D side-scrolling perspective in favour of the three-dimensional first-person shooter view from *Prime* and *Echoes*. On paper, with the DS stylus and dual screens, the new direction made sense, but in practice it didn't work as well as fans had hoped. While the game did a great job of squeezing the atmosphere and gameplay of the GameCube titles into the humble DS, the problems resided in the game's fiddly controls, which required a combination of both the D-pad and stylus to move Samus. To the game's credit it does improve on *Echoes'* lacklustre multiplayer section, and, control issues aside, it's still an enjoyable *Metroid* outing.

The final game in the saga, *Metroid Prime 3: Corruption*, was released on the Wii in 2007 and represents the conclusion of the *Prime* trilogy, continuing six months after the events of *Echoes*. Taking its cues from *Metroid Fusion*, Samus is again infected by a deadly substance – this time the radioactive matter known as Phazon – and is now fighting to save her own life while also trying to stop the Phazon threat from spreading to other planets. Unlike *Hunters*, it doesn't suffer in the handling department, with many fans saying it has the best controls out of all three games. Like the other *Prime* games, *Corruption* adheres to the open-world *Metroid* formula and serves as a fitting end to what can only be considered one of the best videogame series of all time.

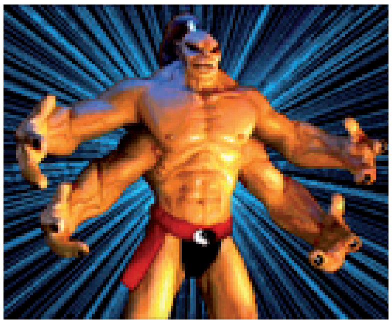
The only other *Metroid* title we should pay tribute to is the still-unconfirmed and rumoured-to-be-in-development DS follow-up to *Fusion; Metroid Dread*. This portable title has been spinning around in the rumour mill since 2005, back when Game Informer announced Nintendo's Intelligence Systems was working on a new 2D *Metroid* game for DS. There is still no word from Nintendo whether or not the game is in development, but in 2007 interest was reignited when IGN discovered a telling message hidden in *Metroid Prime 3* that read "Experiment status report update: *Metroid* project 'Dread' is nearing the final stages of completion." But two years on we're still waiting for the game to appear.

As **Retro Gamer** goes to press, we have heard faint rumblings that a brand new *Metroid* game (in addition to the recently announced *Metroid Prime* Wii trilogy) could be heading our way. Whether it's the long-awaited *Metroid Dread* remains to be seen, but if our suspicions are correct, by the time you read this you may already know the answer. Still, given that the excellence of this series, which spans 22 years, gave us ten great games, and created an entire videogame sub-genre, whatever the announcement turns out to be, we're convinced Nintendo's most un-Nintendo series will continue to live up to its legacy and the lofty expectations of its loyal fan base.

BOSS/RUSH

WHERE WE SQUARE OFF AGAINST THAT END-OF-LEVEL BADDIE FROM YESTERYEAR…

GORO



GAME INFO



- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- **RELEASED:** 1992
- **PUBLISHER:** MIDWAY
- **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE



» [Mega Drive] Goro's lair isn't much to look at and not really befitting of a supposed prince. Then again he has got four arms and scales.



» [Mega Drive] The Goro statue is grossly oversized. According to those measurements he should dwarf the other combatants, but it's not the case.

While we're sure some fans out there would plump for shape-shifting Shang Tsung, we'd argue that Goro is *Mortal Kombat*'s most iconic boss character. Why? Well this half-dragon meets nightclub doorman sums up quite tidily the good and bad parts of *Mortal Kombat*: Goro is the virtual personification of all the gory, violent and irksome combat the player has to endure to reach him.

The world was first introduced to Goro back in 1992 when the big lug appeared as the penultimate boss character in Midway's seminal arcade beat-'em-up. Goro was the undefeated winner of the Mortal Kombat tournament for 500 years, acquiring the prestigious accolade of Grand Champion after defeating the Shaolin monk Kung Lao. With Goro crowned the new champion, the tournament fell into the hands of an evil sorcerer named Shang Tsung, the game's final boss. Assuming the role of Grandmaster, Shang Tsung organises, bankrolls and hosts the violent tournament on his private island, and uses Goro as his muscle.

Having fought through *Mortal Kombat*'s roster of characters, beaten your doppelganger in a Mirror Match and cleared the game's three Endurance Matches, Goro finally appears to face the player in his lair. Quickly it becomes evident that none of the usual cheap *Mortal Kombat* fight techniques are effective on him. The old four leg sweeps and uppercut trick yields nothing, as does repeatedly hitting him with a bevy of the same flying kick, which is now met with a barrage of blocks and a nasty uppercut. Quickly, what began as the bringer of bum-tingling terror quickly evaporates into a white hot haze of frustration as your character is beaten blue and torso-stomped in the same amount of time it takes to initiate a random thought.

Over the years Goro has appeared in the series on a number of occasions. An early hiatus after *Mortal Kombat* eventually ended with the home console release of *Mortal Kombat 4*, where Goro played an exclusive sub-boss in the game. After that he appeared in the GameCube port of *Mortal Kombat: Deception*, *Mortal Kombat: Armageddon* and also made a brief cameo appearance in the PlayStation 2 3D beat-'em-up, *Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks*.

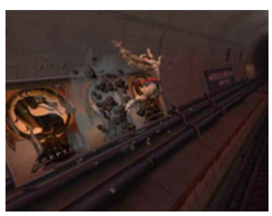
And, to be frank, he's also one of the better elements of the surprisingly watchable *Mortal Kombat* movie, where he appears at the end of the film to fight playboy narcissist Johnny Cage and gets killed for his troubles. Yeah, his film career was over in a flash, but at least he went down in a blaze of glory.

In videogames, though, time has also seen Goro's evil wane. Originally depicted as a bullish, violent murder machine, it transpires that Goro was completely unaware that he was being used as an instrument for evil. In both *Mortal Kombat 4* and *Deadly Alliance*, the games show him realising the fact and setting to right past wrongs, thus proving that you should never judge a four-armed man-dragon on a first encounter. But while Goro's temperament may have softened, even today he remains a formidable and terrorising piece of stop-motion animation and a classic and iconic character in the *Mortal Kombat* universe.

"GORO IS THE VIRTUAL PERSONIFICATION OF ALL THE GORY, VIOLENT AND IRKSOME COMBAT THE PLAYER HAS TO ENDURE TO REACH HIM"



» [Game Boy] By entering a code during the end credits, Goro is actually playable in the Game Boy version of *Mortal Kombat*.



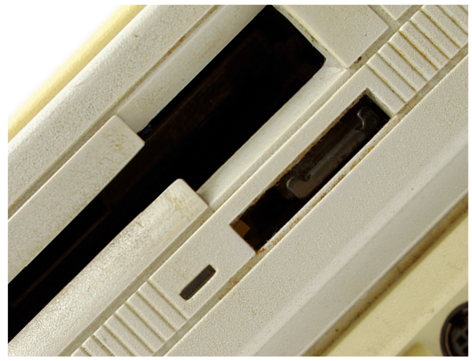
» [PS2] Goro's not really a bad chap, just misguided. His four arms come in handy too; apparently he makes a great goalie.



» [Arcade] Goro is one of the few characters to be modelled via stop-motion, as the end credits of the arcade game reveal.





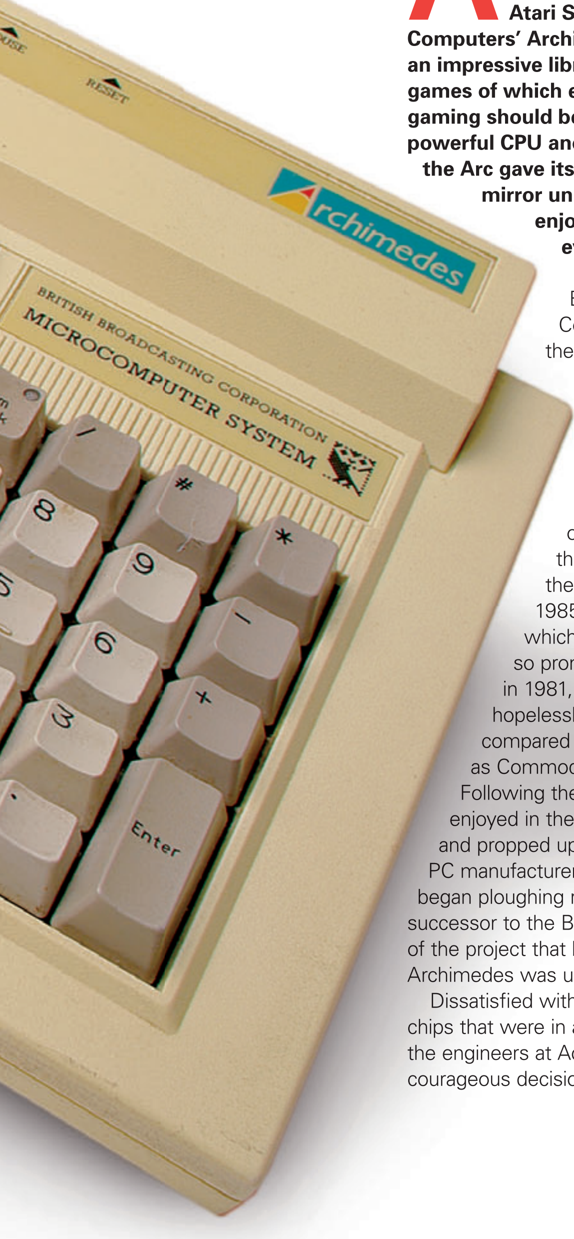




"The engineers at Acorn took the courageous decision to design their own microprocessor chip"

ACORN ARCHIMEDES

Produced between 1987 and 1999, the Acorn Archimedes featured a range of models to spark the interest of any vintage enthusiast. Michael Reed reveals why we should never forget



Although it never achieved the same level of sales as home-console rivals Atari ST and Amiga, Acorn Computers' Archimedes still enjoyed an impressive library of exclusive games of which every fan of classic gaming should be aware. Thanks to its powerful CPU and colourful graphics, the Arc gave its owners their own mirror universe of games to enjoy, encompassing every genre.

By the mid-Eighties, British company Acorn Computers was riding the crest of a wave having secured a contract to produce an education-orientated computer, the BBC Micro. However, the ever-evolving nature of technology dictates that nothing ever stays the same for long, and by 1985 the 8-bit BBC Micro, which had put the company so prominently on the map in 1981, was beginning to look hopelessly old-fashioned when compared with such competition as Commodore's 16-bit Amiga.

Following the success that it enjoyed in the education sector, and propped up by shareholder PC manufacturer Olivetti, Acorn began ploughing research funds into a successor to the Beeb. The first stage of the project that became the legendary Archimedes was under way.

Dissatisfied with the microprocessor chips that were in available at that time, the engineers at Acorn took the rather courageous decision to boldly design their own using a fashionable new approach called the Reduced Instruction Set Computer (RISC). The RISC design methodology involves removing instructions that are infrequently used, in order to create a chip that is less complex. The result of Acorn's efforts, the Acorn RISC Machine (ARM) – which was later changed to the Advanced RISC Machine – chip, was one of the best performing chips of its generation, and about four times as fast as the 68000 that powered machines such as the Amiga. In fact, the performance of the finished chip surprised even Acorn engineer Sophie Wilson, who reveals that: "What we didn't expect was that a chip designed for 4MHz would run at 6MHz and, with some tweaking to critical paths, 8MHz."

The next surprise for the designers was that they had difficulty measuring the power usage of the first ARM as it drew so little. The ARM chip became the heart of Acorn's new machine, and thanks to its efficient design, it went on to become the lasting legacy of Acorn Computers. For example, the ARM is now the most common CPU found in embedded applications such as mobile phones.

And it didn't stop there, because Acorn also created a set of powerful custom chips to power the graphics, sound and input/output. The graphics architecture lacked some of the Amiga's more elaborate features – such as a blitter, copper chip and hardware sprites – but it was still capable of matching the Amiga's sprite-plotting prowess thanks to the far faster processor. The lack of a copper chip was apparent in some conversions of 16-colour games, such as *Gods* and *Twin World*, as they lacked the colourful graduated skylines of the Amiga versions.

Another limitation was the fixed palette in 256-colour modes, which gave games a look that favoured primary colours. However, the most common gaming mode of 320x256 pixels with 256 colours still exceeded the baseline capabilities of most of the competition.

After a false start involving a US-based design team, Acorn Computers was left with a serious problem, because the hardware would be finished a long time before a potential operating system. The

INSTANT EXPERT

Like the BBC Micro before it, Archimedes' most common gaming keys were Z, X, ', /, and <return>.

All RISC OS-driven machines have a version of BASIC built into the ROM. Press F12, then type the word 'basic' to access it.

The Arc had eight-channel sound and each channel could be assigned to one of seven stereo positions.

RISC OS is still a commercial product that is being developed. For emulation purposes, you can buy a version of RISC OS 4 for £5 from the RISC OS Ltd website **sales.riscos.com**.

Most teachers wouldn't have approved, but many British youngsters got a sneaky first taste of 32-bit gaming on an Acorn machine at school.

The 1989 Acorn A3000 was the final machine in the range to have the words 'Archimedes' or 'BBC' on the case.

Nearly all Arcs lacked a digital joystick interface. Fortunately, third parties created add-on adaptors with software to simulate key presses.

The first-generation machines, with an 8MHz CPU and 1MB of RAM, became the baseline for most gaming, in the same way Amiga A500 and Atari 520ST did.

Most Arcs featured the famous red function keys, a signature livery that began with the BBC Micro. This tradition was phased out in favour of a more business-like look on the final workstations.

Eagle-eyed viewers of action show *24* may have spotted computer geek Edgar Stiles using RISC OS at CTU headquarters. Doubtless he installed it for trouble-free access to the best version of classic *Elite*.



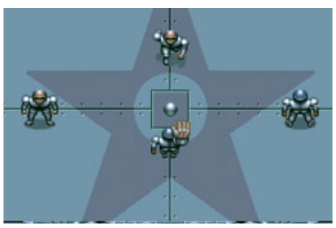
THE CURRENT SCENE

Like a lot of classic platforms, RISC OS has been kept alive by a strong community who run a combination of vintage computers and newer compatible hardware. We asked Chris Williams of **drobe.co.uk** about the current RISC OS scene and he was optimistic. "There's the usual stream of side developments and updates to keep things ticking over," he says. "From new versions of desktop software to a new graphics card designed to perk up some of the old hardware." Each year there are a couple of shows and some user group meet-ups. The biggest development seems set to come from the shared source branch of RISC OS. As Chris explains: "It's somewhat exciting at the moment in as far as things are actually happening that we didn't expect. The OS is being gradually ported to a new range of ARM-compatible processors found in swish netbooks and other gadgets so many more people will be able to use RISC OS on newer hardware." So, it seems that your next gadget purchase could involve not just an ARM processor, but also RISC OS as the operating system.













> "Archimedes could be used to teach page layout in one lesson and music composition in the next"

engineers decided to develop a stopgap system based partially on the BBC Micro Operating System (MOS). The result, known as Arthur, allowed consumers and developers to get a glimpse of the amazing hardware in action, but compared to other operating systems of the time, it was a major disappointment. It didn't even offer multi-tasking. Backwards compatibility with BBC MOS gave existing developers a head-start in understanding the machine, but limited the architecture decisions that the designers could make. An additional problem was that any later OS would have to be backwards compatible with Arthur or else it would risk alienating developers.

In 1987, Acorn released the first Archimedes-branded workstations. The A310 was at the top of the range with an 8MHz processor and 1MB of RAM, while the somewhat cheaper A305 came with 512K. Although not massively more expensive than other high-end workstations of that time, the relatively inflated price did become an issue that dogged the platform throughout its life. The machines shipped with the Arthur operating system ROMs fitted internally, and the ROM-based operating system was a unique feature that made operation without a hard disk a much more reasonable proposition than it was on other workstations.



Selling a basically incomplete and fairly expensive computer would have been an uphill struggle for most companies, but Acorn had several unique advantages. First, its monopoly in British education guaranteed thousands of sales from the beginning. Second, there already existed a network of user groups and high-street magazines that viewed the Archimedes as the natural successor to the BBC Micro. The reactions from the technology press were mostly positive as the machine was truly one of the fastest money could buy. The fact that it was a true 32-bit system was also a major selling point.

Most of the first commercial game releases were basic – in more ways than one, some of them were written in BASIC – but they began to demonstrate the viability of the Archimedes as a gaming platform. Alongside the first simple platformers and horizontal shooters, the first ports from other platforms began to appear. Ports were a good idea for the relatively small Archimedes market as the asset development, such as graphics, level data and even the packaging had already been completed. Archimedes owners were lucky enough to be able to play some of the big multiformat hits, but they also made the most of some good games that had been only low-key successes on their native platform.

Finally, about one year after the first hardware release, in 1988 Acorn brought out the successor to Arthur. RISC OS 2 was an operating system equivalent in quality to the hardware upon which it ran. Wilson confirmed that the relief felt among owners was shared by Acorn Computers. "The system really only became what we had desired with the release of RISC OS," she comments. Although RISC OS offered multi-tasking and advanced features such as scalable outline fonts, it was surprisingly efficient. The sheer speed at which the graphical interface operated was a benefit that was quite difficult to convey in pictures.

The combination of speedy hardware and a powerful operating system meant that Acorn's Archimedes was now an excellent all-rounder for serious applications. In a classroom environment, this meant that a basic Archimedes could be used to teach page layout in one lesson and then music composition or multimedia work in the next. PCs of the time were hampered by an extremely poor user interface, and an Apple Macintosh that could perform at the same level as an Archimedes would have been much more expensive.

COMMUNITY ACORN ARCHIMEDES SITES TO WATCH

Drobe
www.drobe.co.uk

Headed up by journalist Chris Williams, the Drobe team maintain an active news website that can be considered the nucleus of the modern Archimedes scene. Their site focuses on the most recent developments in the RISC OS world, rather than simply the vintage heritage of the machine.



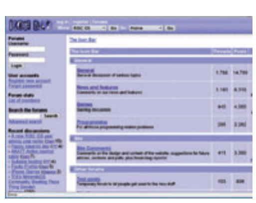
Usenet: comp.sys.acorn.misc
http://groups.google.co.uk/group/comp.sys.acorn.misc/

Usenet provides the most active forum for discussion on the platform. If you have a question, this is the place to ask it. If you can't be bothered to set up a Usenet newsreader program, don't worry, because Google provides a front end.



The Icon Bar
www.iconbar.com/forums

Admittedly, the main news section of the Icon Bar website is rarely updated these days. However, the forum is still active. A lot of the participants were around 'back in the day', so they are more than likely to be able to answer any query about an old machine or piece of software. Give them a try at the address listed above.



riscos.info
www.riscos.info/index.php/RISC_OS

A hub for RISC OS software development, this site is the home of such projects as the Firefox port, Arc emulator RPCemu, and the GCC compiler. To find out about the modern face of software development on RISC OS, or the latest ported utilities, make this site your starting point.



VARIATIONS

Acorn Archimedes A310
Released: 1987

The A310 and its sister machine, the A305, were the first Archimedes hardware releases. They have a separate keyboard and the metal case was designed to carry a monitor. The later 400 series were cosmetically similar variants with different memory and hard drive options.

BBC A3000
Released: 1989

The wedge-shaped case with a built-in disk drive located around the side gave this model a look reminiscent of the Amiga A500 and the Atari 520ST. This machine became the baseline standard for gaming over most of the life of the series. Like most Archimedes, it requires a vintage monitor.

Acorn A4
Released: 1991

This was Acorn Computers' only attempt at a laptop. The case was actually taken from a standard PC laptop of the time, and the innards were repackaged to make the A5000 desktop computer. It lacked a built-in pointing device and featured a 16-scale greyscale screen, which was fairly standard back in 1991.

A5000
Released: 1991

The A5000 model was arguably one of the greatest machines that Acorn ever produced. This two-box design came with a faster processor and more memory RISC OS 3 as standard. On the downside, however, the graphics and sound hardware were more or less the same as the previous generation.

A3010
Released: 1992

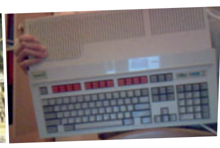
Sporting distinctive green function keys, the A3010 was Acorn's final attempt to steal sales away from the Amiga and ST. Unusually for an Archimedes, it features both built-in TV modulator and joystick ports. The A3010 also benefits from a slight performance enhancement over the earlier machines.

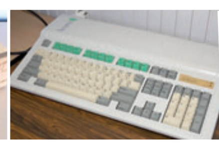
RISC PC
Released: 1994

Once again, Acorn fans could hold their heads high as this 233MHz model was one of the most powerful workstations available. The graphics, sound and CPU capabilities were indeed competitive, but the software architecture was beginning to creak. You'll still find a number of people running these.

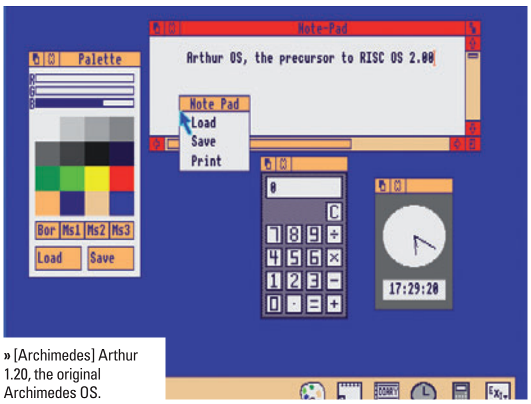
A9Home
Released: 2005

Advantage 6's A9Home comes with a 400MHz processor, 128MB of main system RAM, and 8 megs of VRAM. Because modern ARM chips aren't quite compatible with those used in vintage Arcs, the A9Home requires an extra piece of software to run legacy application. Recent apps run fine. Head over to **www.advantage6.com**.

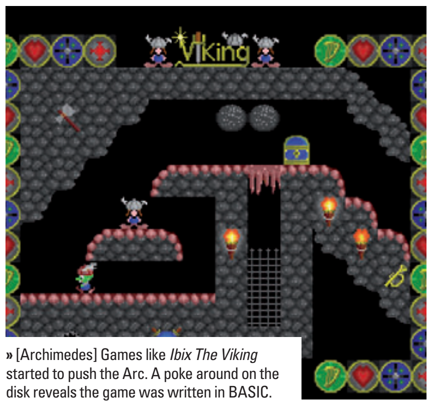



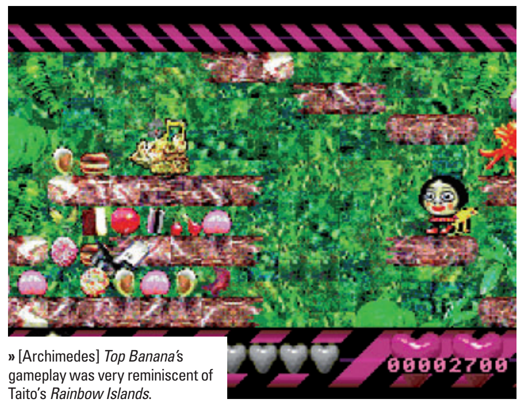




» [Archimedes] Arthur 1.20, the original Archimedes OS.



» [Archimedes] Games like *Ibix The Viking* started to push the Arc. A poke around on the disk reveals the game was written in BASIC.



» [Archimedes] *Top Banana's* gameplay was very reminiscent of Taito's *Rainbow Islands*.

As good as RISC OS was, it was not perfect. Some of the design decisions were somewhat curtailed by its backwards compatibility with Arthur, which had in turn been based on BBC MOS. For one thing, the multi-tasking of RISC OS was based on a co-operative model, much like contemporary versions of Mac OS and Microsoft Windows. In a co-operative system, the applications themselves have to manage some of the multi-tasking process. The net result is a system that isn't quite as smooth and crash resistant as it could be, because the whole system is at the mercy of a badly written or crashing application. Modern operating systems, such as Linux and all versions of Windows from Windows 95 onwards, use pre-emptive multi-tasking, a superior system. Even the Amiga OS of 1985 used pre-emption.

A myth seems to pervade within some retro gaming circles that the Acorn Archimedes didn't have many good games. It did. It just didn't have as many as the Amiga and the Atari ST. One of the main problems with gaming on the Archimedes was that, due to the shoestring budget upon which they were produced, many of the games featured graphics that were drawn by the programmers. This approach, which was the way that most 8-bit videogames had been created, occurred at a time when Amiga titles were often created by a team of designers and artists. Visually speaking there were a couple of gems, but in practice users sometimes didn't get to see the full benefit of the amazing specs.

The classic period of Acorn Archimedes gaming existed between 1987 and about 1993. As with the Amiga, most videogames were designed to run on the basic, lowest-common-denominator hardware, although a number of the final games were capable of taking advantage of the extra facilities of later hardware.

Acorn Computers had enjoyed a massive lead over the competition upon the machine's release, but unfortunately, it didn't aggressively defend that lead. And the price was always slightly more than the competition in any given market. For example, in 1993 Acorn made a final attempt to secure some of the home gaming market with a single-box computer called the Acorn A3010. Unfortunately, the equivalent machine from Commodore, the Amiga A1200, had far superior graphics, a great deal more software and was about £100 cheaper – quite a significant difference in that market. By the early-Nineties, the hardware releases were starting to become rather lacklustre. Models based around faster processors were periodically released, but the graphics system was hardly upgraded until the 1994 release of RISC PC, the final Archimedes workstation. To outside observers, it seemed the company was resting on its laurels, a mistake that Commodore would soon repeat. Losing ground on all sides, Acorn shut its workstation division in 1999.





Special thanks to Sophie Wilson, Chris Williams, Advantage 6 Ltd and Deck 13 Software



PERFECT TEN GAMES

ACORN'S ARCHIMEDES PLAYED HOST TO A HUGE NUMBER OF WONDERFUL GAMES, SO TO SAVE YOU TIME, WE'VE LISTED THE TEN ARC GAMES YOU MUST PLAY BEFORE YOU DIE

ELITE

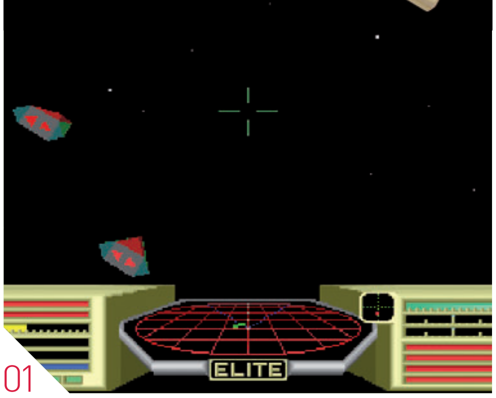
- » **RELEASE:** 1991
- » **PUBLISHER:** HYBRID TECHNOLOGY
- » **CREATOR:** WARREN BURCH AND CLIVE GRINGRAS
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** NONE

01 **Elite on the** Archimedes is rightly regarded as the definitive version of this legendary game – a fitting honour as the title actually started out life on an earlier Acorn machine, the BBC Micro. The Archimedes rendition of the classic three-dimensional combat space trading game is faithful to the original but with a few clever refinements. In addition to the most impressive graphics of any version of *Elite*, this one also managed to take the player out of the centre of the game world to some extent. While it was strangely soothing to sit back and watch a miner going about his business in an asteroid field, it was exhilarating to watch police Vipers peel off to rescue a trader under attack by pirates.

CHOCKS AWAY

- » **RELEASE:** 1990
- » **PUBLISHER:** THE 4TH DIMENSION
- » **CREATOR:** ANDREW HUTCHINGS
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** CHOPPER FORCE (1992), ANOTHER FUN FLIGHT SIM

02 **The flight simulator** trend of the era may have been moving towards detail and seriousness, but *Chocks Away* emphasised fun above all else. Like many classic retro games, it was very easy to pick up, but somewhat more tricky to master. "Come on, baby, hold it together," you'd whisper while nursing a battered plane back home for a challenging carrier landing. Well, we did. Most of the missions amounted to solo raids deep into enemy territory to destroy armament factories, barrage balloons, and other vital elements of the enemy war machine. Even better, you could team up with a mate for some split-screen or serial link-up action.



01

TWIN WORLD

- » **RELEASE:** 1990
- » **PUBLISHER:** CYGNUS SOFTWARE ENGINEERING
- » **CREATOR:** BLUE BYTE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ZOOL (1992)

03 **Twin World can** boast the three essential components of a classic platformer and it has them in spades: slick, responsive controls, just the right amount of variety, and a challenge that feels tough but fair. The control system, in particular, can make or break a platformer. The graphics, which looked a bit flat in an era of garish visuals, now look tastefully understated. The Arc version lacks the colourful skyline of the Amiga but features slightly tweaked sound and gameplay. The odd puzzle, a tricky but satisfying firing method, and excellent music round out a game that never received its due on home platforms but is rightly remembered as a classic.

TECHNODREAM

- » **RELEASE:** 1993
- » **PUBLISHER:** SUPERIOR SOFTWARE
- » **CREATOR:** GRAEME RICHARDSON
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** THE REPTON SERIES (1985-PRESENT)

04 **Like Graeme Richardson's** earlier horizontally scrolling shooter *Nevryon* (incidentally a game well worth checking out), *Technodream* owed a great deal to *R-Type* and *Scramble*. All the classic elements are here: safe spots in the centre of a wave, pick-up weapon upgrades and end-of-section bosses with a secret weakness. At times, the Arc throws out up to 80 well-animated sprites. The difficulty is tough, but that's to be expected from a game of this sort. Great graphics and challenging gameplay were topped off with a two-player mode. *Blowpipe* is another extremely good game in a similar vein.

TEK 1608

- » **RELEASE:** 2002
- » **PUBLISHER:** ARTEX SOFTWARE
- » **CREATOR:** ARTEX SOFTWARE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** EXODUS (1997), A GALAXY-CONQUEST STRAT TITLE

05 **This RTS is** notable as the final commercial game released on the platform. Apparently, Acorn was involved in the development at one point as it was keen to have a good multiplayer game for one of its network computer projects. The finished game is probably one of the most advanced isometric-view RTSs ever released, with features such as the remote-view windows. The game was later ported to the Windows platform where it suffered for not being a true 3D game. Developer Artex had previously released galactic conquest game *Exodus*. The Arc also had a port of *Dune II*, the progenitor to most modern RTS games.



02



03



04



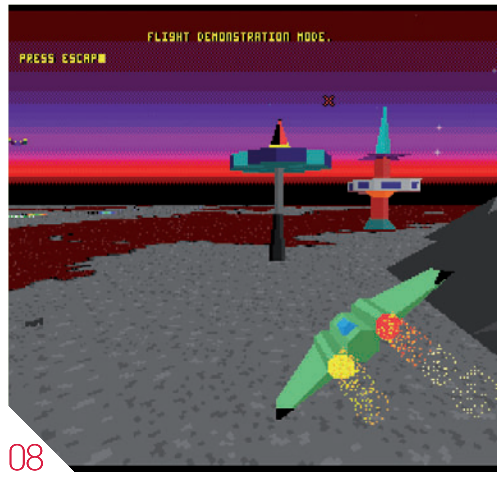
05



06



07



08

ANKH

- » **RELEASE:** 1998
- » **PUBLISHER:** ARTEX SOFTWARE
- » **CREATOR:** ARTEX SOFTWARE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** BOT KILLER 2 (1999)

06 **An Egyptian-themed** title from Artex Software. Content creation for adventure games is very resource intensive, and the Arc didn't have many native examples. *Ankh's* gameplay is similar to other point-and-clicks such as *Simon The Sorcerer* and *Monkey Island*. It needs a late-era machine to run, thanks to the 640x400 32,000-colour graphics. *Ankh* was ported to PC, and 2008 saw the release of the latest game in the series, *Ankh: Curse Of The Scarab King* on Nintendo DS. The WIMP game was another native adventure game and a port of *Simon The Sorcerer* alongside Magnetic Scrolls games such as *Fish* and *Wonderland*.

TOWER OF BABEL

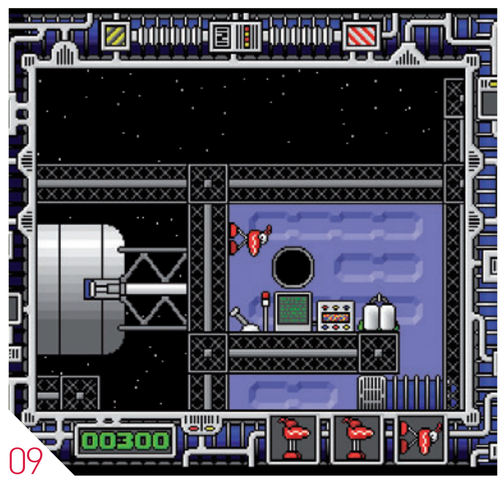
- » **RELEASE:** 1991
- » **PUBLISHER:** CYGNUS SOFTWARE ENGINEERING
- » **CREATOR:** PETER COOK (ORIG) JAMES BYRNE AND JAMES HARTSHORN (ARC)
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** IRON LORD (1991)

07 **With its improved** graphics and sound, this 3D puzzler was another multiformat hit on Archimedes and yet it's criminally under-rated in general. In *Tower Of Babel*, the player takes remote control of three robots – a pusher, a zapper and a grabber – in a multi-level chequerboard environment complete with lifts and automatic guns. The puzzles start off fairly easy, but you're soon knee-deep in well thought-out stinkers. If you're a fan of games that make you go 'hang on' when the solution occurs to you the next day, this might just be the game for you.

STAR FIGHTER 3000

- » **RELEASE:** 1994
- » **PUBLISHER:** FEDNET SOFTWARE
- » **CREATOR:** FEDNET SOFTWARE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** STUNT RACER 2000 (1993)

08 **Star Fighter 3000** is quite possibly the ultimate Archimedes shooter. This three-dimensional game features a thrilling mixture of flat-shaded and texture-mapped graphics. It took full advantage of the faster processors of later machines and was also ported to the ARM-powered 3DO console among other platforms. Utilising a third-person behind-the-ship perspective, the player could fly around the map completing combat-heavy missions. Getting the balance right is essential when designing a mission-based shooter, and *Star Fighter 3000* is easy to fly, but contains tough challenges.



09

BUG HUNTER IN SPACE

- » **RELEASE:** 1990
- » **PUBLISHER:** MINERVA
- » **CREATOR:** IAN RICHARDSON
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** IBIX THE VIKING (1988), PLATFORMER

09 **The titular hero** starred in not one, but two Archimedes videogames, and this one was definitely the best. *Bug Hunter In Space* is a logic-puzzle-driven platform game that is stuck in two eras at the same time. Similar videogames were all about the action, but the *Bug Hunter* series was a throwback to a previous era and a more considered pace. And that's perhaps the secret of its success: *Bug Hunter In Space* is not an evolution of the 8-bit platformer, it's an update. The basic but colourful graphics combine with the game's overall quality to produce a title not in quite the same universe as anything else in the vintage gaming world.

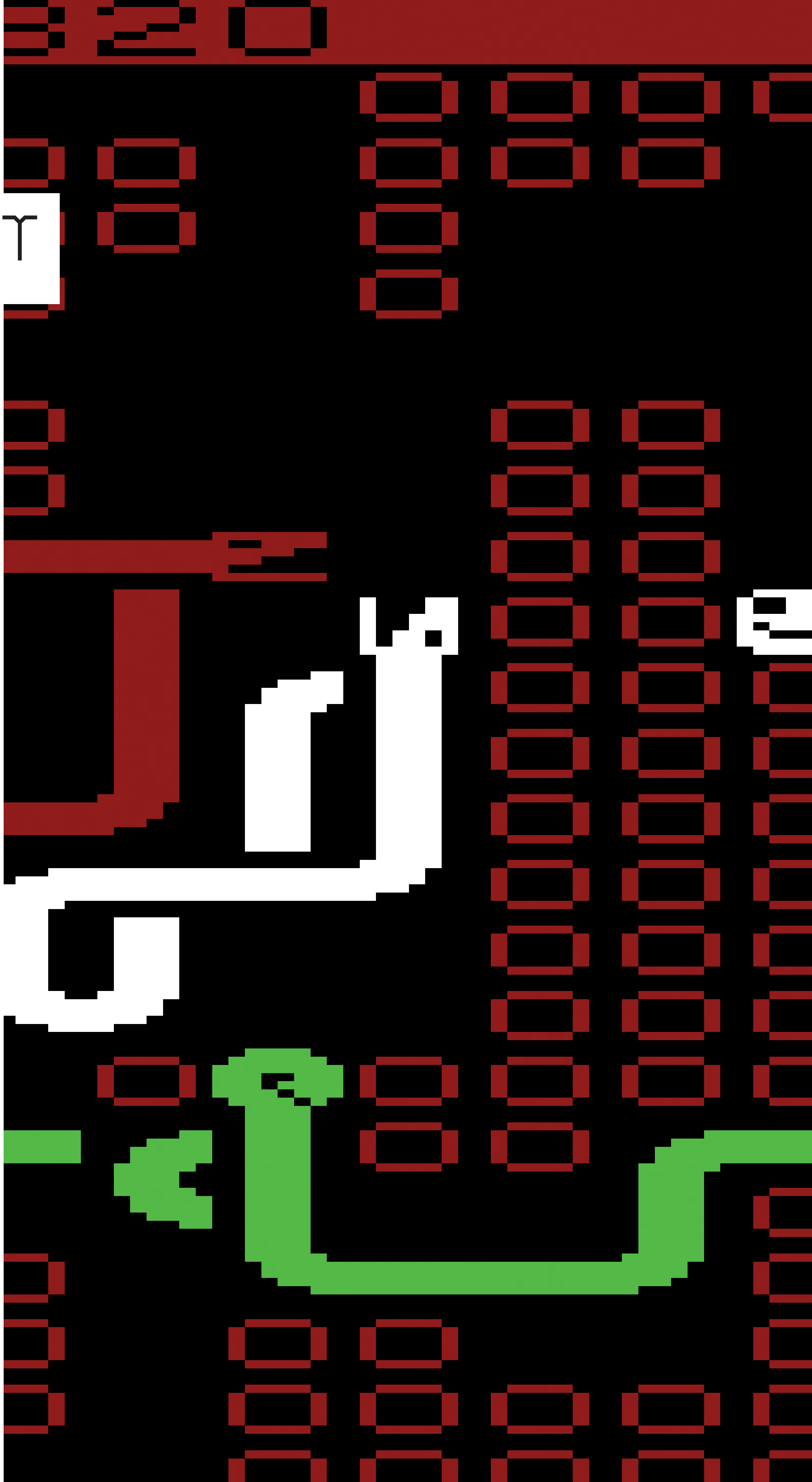
HAMSTERS

- » **RELEASE:** 1994
- » **PUBLISHER:** GAMESWARE
- » **CREATOR:** TOM COOPER
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DARKWOOD (1995), A THIRD-PERSON RPG

10 **What do you** get if you cross a hammer with a weird little main character and an army of furry enemies? Tom Cooper created a number of the final Archimedes games and this is one of his humorous psychedelic platformers. His creations are fondly remembered as consummate Archimedes games as they sum up the 'can do' attitude of the lone Acorn programmer. Guide our hero as he uses a large hammer to both move around the game world and do unspeakable things to furry animals. There's no getting around the fact that it's mad. Tom's other platform games include *Asylum*, *DinoSaw* and *Cycloids*. Yeah, they're mad too.

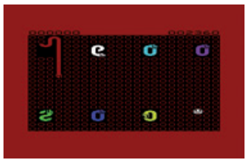


10



SNAKE PIT

SNAKE? SNAAAAAKE....



- » **PUBLISHER:** POSTERN
- » **RELEASED:** 1983
- » **GENRE:** EAT-`EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** VIC 20
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



HISTORY

Before he made his name with the epic Lords Of Midnight, Mike Singleton created several sweet Vic 20 titles. There was Shadowfax, a galloping, graphical tour de force; the relentless stone throwing of Siege; and the ambitious 3-Deep Space, which entailed donning a pair of red-and-blue cellophane glasses to experience the third dimension, and almost ruined his pattern of only releasing games beginning with the letter 'S'.

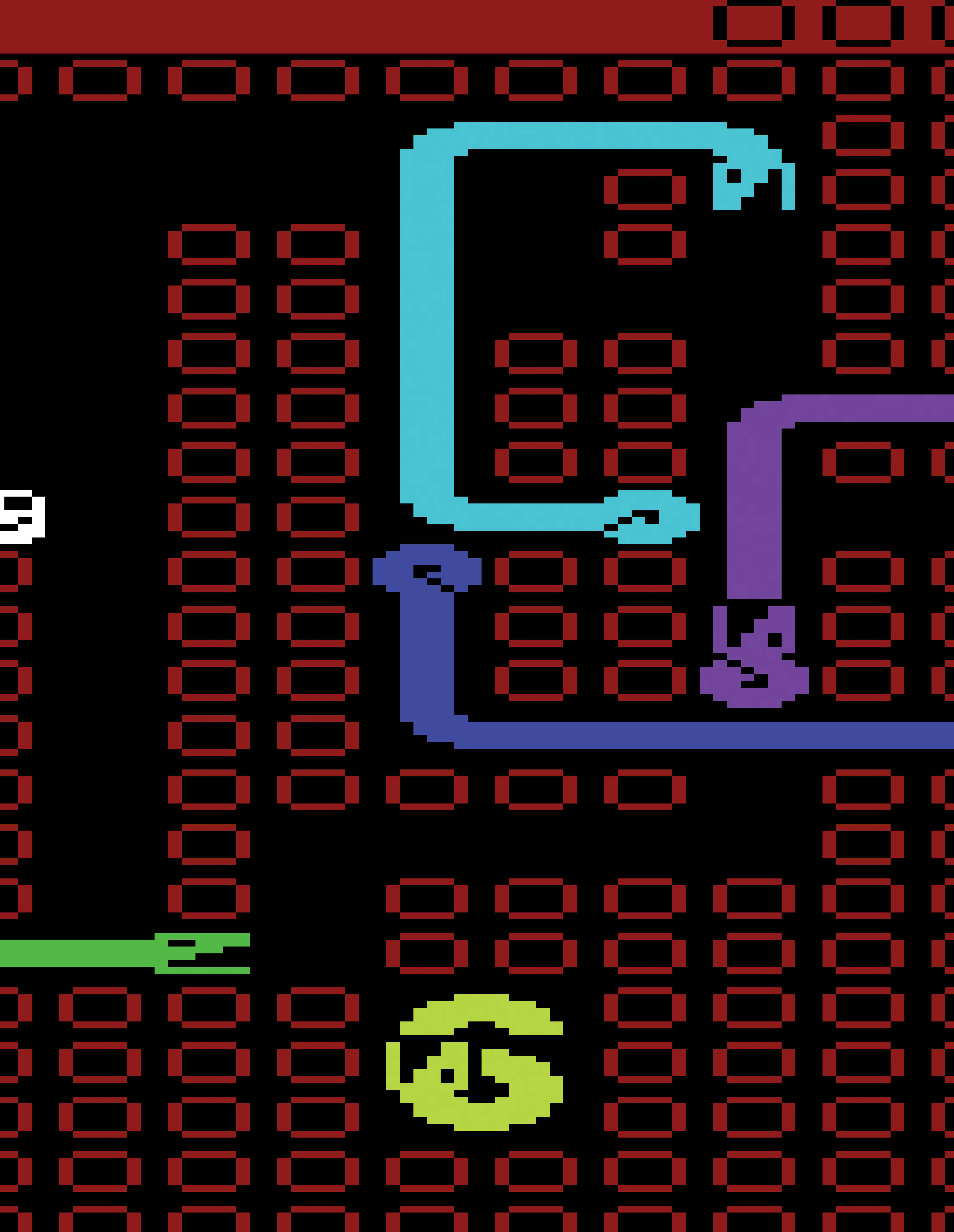
Snake Pit is perhaps the least well known of his early offerings. You control a grinning face tasked with gobbling up a screen full of eggs, while avoiding the jaws of seven giant pythons. Successfully scoff all the eggs and the tables are turned, allowing you to chomp on the tail of your pursuers and miraculously swallow up each serpent in one gulp, before moving on to the next nest.

It's a simple, single-screen affair. But there's subtlety. There are strategies. Only you and the red snake can eat eggs; the others must crawl along in the paths you've each created. Should you leave the cold-blooded killers encased or risk a swift foray to clear out a clutch of eggs? Should you cower behind yolk walls or risk the chomping fangs?

Choices are never clear and tension is always high, mainly due to the randomness of the snakes' movements. Deadly yet dispassionate, they can surround you with venomous intent then slink off nonchalantly like you never existed. Indeed, when you're eventually consumed, they continue to slither on long after your departure, as if your presence in the pit was but a fleeting insignificance.

I've often sat watching the writhing mass long after being swallowed, wondering how long it will take before the red snake devours the final egg, hypnotised by the undulating bodies and the repetitive hiss and rattle of the soundtrack.

It's like snake charming in reverse.



THE MAKING OF... TOOBIN'

From a sleepy Colorado river to Yukon, Mars, the Jurassic and beyond, Toobin' tasks gamers with traversing the most surreal stretches of water found in any game. Join Craig Grannell as he interviews Toobin' creator Dennis Harper, while the pair hurtle downstream, avoiding laser-eyed Sphinxes





"Atari let you do things that other companies wouldn't," Dennis Harper fondly recalls of his stint at the then giant of arcade games, succinctly spelling out what separated Atari from the competition – and most modern companies. "Today, if you came up with a concept at a videogames company, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars and it failed, you'd be fired. But at Atari, everyone felt that no matter what you tried, you were protected – Atari was always behind you. If you worked on something for ages and it didn't work, you'd be fine if you started over, because Atari knew that to truly innovate and get a hit game, you had to try something crazy."

Harper says *Toobin'* was that kind of game. And although it's fair to say the river-based racer isn't a top-tier arcade classic that sits alongside the likes of *Pac-Man* and *Asteroids*, it curiously remains extremely memorable to many retro gamers, and occasionally pops up on retro compilations. Its longevity is perhaps down to unique gameplay, guiding 'rad' can-lobbing 'toobers' Bif and Jet along increasingly perilous rivers, from the Amazon to the canals of Mars.

But we mentioned the 'crazy' earlier, and Toobin' started out as something markedly different to how it ended up. "I wanted to do a kayaking game, if you can believe that," he admits. "Back then, games were all about unique controls, like the 720-degree 'salad bowl' controller. I had this strange modified *Star Wars* controller, with a big stick protruding from both sides. The stick had a pivot and you could use it to simulate a kayak's paddle."

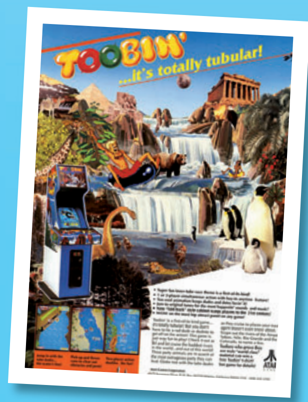
Plenty of work went into this unlikely arcade game. Harper tried simulating the physics of a kayak, digging deep or shallow to determine forward and turning motion. Gates were added for players to perform 'tricks', inspired by ballet-like white-water manoeuvres at the Olympics. "We worked for five months and found that, hey, it wasn't very fun – it was like work," he laughs. The problem was that people don't instinctively know how to paddle a kayak, and with immediacy a key component of successful arcade games, the game was scrapped. "But we'd built this cool playfield tool, invented a complex timing system, and done some great river and water animation, and so we didn't want to throw everything away," says Dennis. "We started brainstorming about what people like to do in water. One guy, who liked going on boats a whole lot, said people just enjoy sitting in an inner tube, drinking beer, and I said, 'Exactly! That's what we're gonna do!'"

With the basic idea in place of two guys in tubes, drifting along, having fun, the next question was how to control them. The big game of the day was *Track & Field*, and its influence indelibly rubbed off on *Toobin'*. "We had this idea of a *Track & Field* controller where you could tap to go forwards and backwards, and turn on a dime, and the faster you tapped the faster you'd go," says Dennis. "We then resurrected elements of the kayaking game, like the gates, where if you go through cleanly you get more points." Also, despite the increasingly irreverent nature of *Toobin'*, he was keen to retain decent physics: "*Toobin'* is a very bouncy game! I wanted to make the tubes bounce off everything and feel realistic. I've always been a big advocate of physics in games. Even in those days I was trying to write realistic simulations of how things felt, despite a lack of CPU power."

Inspired by *Paperboy*, can throws entered the mix, enabling you to discover items

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- » **DEVELOPER:** ATARI
- » **RELEASED:** 1988
- » **PLATFORMS:** ARCADE (ATARI SYSTEM II)
- » **GENRE:** RACING
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £500+ FOR A WORKING CAB; £1 FOR HOME CONVERSIONS

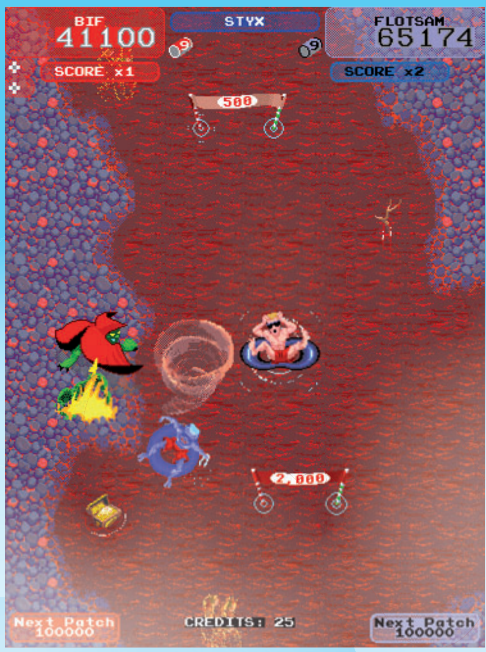


"We'd done some great river and water animation, and so we didn't want to throw everything away"

» [Arcade] Slight historical liberties are taken with the Jurassic stage, which is populated with dinosaurs and axe-throwing cavemen.



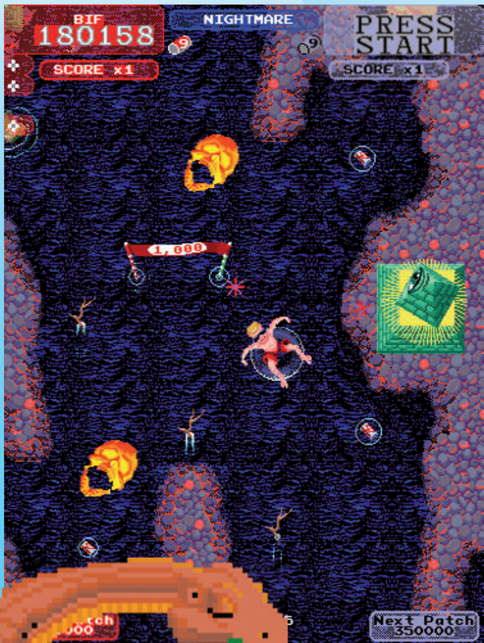
» [Arcade] In mythology, Styx is the river between Earth and Hades. In *Toobin'*, it's a torrent of blood, populated by angry demons. Nice.



» [Arcade] The terrifying version of the Nile in *Toobin'* includes laser-spitting Sphinxes and more terrorists than you can shake an AK-47 at.



THE MAKING OF… TOOBIN'





[Arcade] If you're ever in a tube and see cattle steaming towards you, get out of the way.



[Arcade] As they jump into the river, little do Bif and Jet know what they're letting themselves in for.

hidden under brambles in the water and fight off the enemies peppering the levels – and what levels they are. *Toobin'* finds you idly drifting along a Colorado river, before realising the stretch of water you're on has rather odd properties, subsequently transporting you to the Amazon, Yukon, Mars and even to Jurassic, fantasy and Hell-themed rivers. "When coming up with ideas, we listed the world's rivers and wondered what to do next," says Dennis on the process behind choosing the game's 15 varied locations. "We had all these crazy ideas. And so you're lazing around in a tube, floating down a river, and you're suddenly in this really weird place. It's like everything evolves around you, and all of a sudden things start to get strange."

To keep players guessing throughout, the team decided to build *Toobin'* on a complex tree. "You start at the same place, but the river soon branches, and if you take one branch, you have a very different set of experiences than if you take the other," explains Dennis. "We were careful not to repeat places and branches during the game, and we also alternated short and long branches. For every environment, there's a long and short stretch, which resulted in 30 different playfields that could be mixed and matched."

To add to the atmosphere, special care was taken with the game's audio and characters. As a musician, Dennis worked closely with Atari's composers to ensure the game's environments had representative music: "I wanted really great themes, so, for instance, when you're transitioning into the nightmare zone, you feel spooked. Audio was a really important part of the experience." And as the game progressed, dozens of characters appeared to bring your quest to an end, including violent fishermen, spear-lobbing Eskimos, aliens and dinosaurs. "We tried to get spooky and weird – I like the pyramid with the eye that zaps you, and, as a programmer, I enjoyed creating the flying saucers in the Mars phase that zip around quickly, zap you and then fly away."

Although most of the game's characters exist to ramp up the difficulty level as the game progresses, usually via increasing in number or having weaponry that discharges more frequently, there was a different strategy behind the game's most hated adversary. "Everyone hates the gator," laughs Dennis. "But then that's what he's there for: to hate." He explains that when people were playing early versions of *Toobin'* they often hung around the top of the screen, letting the scroll push them down rather than using the controls. "We needed some way of getting them into the gameplay, forcing them down the screen, and so we introduced the chase factor," explains Dennis. "If you lurk at the top of the screen too much, the gator comes out and gets you!"

For similar reasons, solo players soon found their idle bobbing about on the river rudely interrupted by 'ghost' player Flotsam. "We discovered a single player could essentially cheat by lurking at the back, and *Toobin'* became a much easier game. During co-op play it was much more challenging, and so that's why the ghost player came in," says Dennis. "He was a feat of programming, because that's basically an AI guy, right? He's gotta know where he's

Beer = creativity?

WHO SAYS BEER just destroys brain cells? Well, quite a lot of people as it happens, but in some cases beer can prove a surprising inspirational force, as it did when the *Toobin'* team put the final touches to the game's cabinet.

Instead of a static decal displaying the game's name, *Toobin'* has a moving waterfall beneath. "That was all down to Milt Loper, the mechanical designer," says Dennis. "He got the idea from those beer signs you'd see in a bar, like the Coors beer waterfall, and he's like, 'We need to make one of those!'" Dennis recalls that Milt actually bought an example of such a sign, dismantled it, figured out how it worked, reassembled it, and then set about designing the cabinet's waterfall. We proffer that this was some serious dedication for a relatively small cab feature. "Down to a lot of beer, I guess," jokes Dennis.





[Arcade] With its bottle-throwing punks and toxic spillage, Argentum doesn't paint a rosy picture for future waterways.



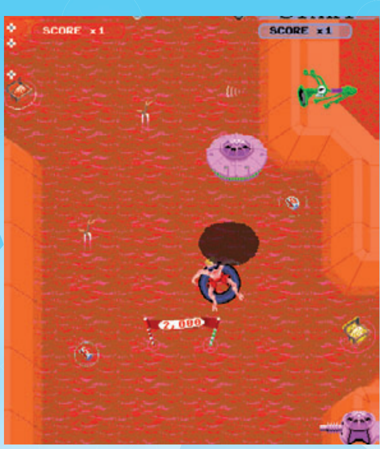
Life's a beach

IF YOU MANAGE to complete one of the *Toobin'* classes, surviving five of the tricky river environments, you wash up on the finish line and are treated to a beach party. This is something of a surreal experience when it comes at the end of the nightmare stage, but this seemingly innocent and jovial 'reward' screen also proved to be the game's most controversial component. "There's this one girl in there that's dancing with no top on," reveals Dennis, adding that this fact probably escapes most players, due to the character in question being so small and facing away from you. "But the marketing folks were like, 'You've gotta put a top on her,' and I was like, 'We're not gonna do that – we're not showing anything!' It's just a bare back, and she's only 60 pixels tall anyway, so it's not like you can see anything!"

> "Toobin' really was a labour of love for the team, and everyone really believed in the project. And people always remember the game"

going and what's in front of him. We didn't even call it AI in those days – we just said we had to put a guy in there and he's gotta follow you around!"

Dennis reckons that once all these key components were in place, level design and refinement was largely a process of iterative and organic tweaking, the complex editors constructed during the project's early days paying dividends. "The playfield editor I wrote was based on tiles. We'd have shore tiles, river tiles, waterfalls, rapids… You could sit in front of the game and within 15 minutes have a new playfield that was



[Arcade] Presumably, the Martians are angry at the proliferation of Earth-manufactured cans in the canals.

interesting to play," he remembers, noting that Milt Loper, a mechanical engineer at Atari, really got into working with the editor, experimenting with all sorts of level designs.

According to Dennis, levels were constructed using a layered approach, largely based on whatever felt interesting at the time. The main playfield went down first – rivers, banks and sides – and then motion objects like whirlpools would be overlaid, before finally dropping in the characters. Because the editor was so powerful, changes could be made very quickly, such as the shape of a river section or the location of a character. The only real restriction the team decided on was the aforementioned short and long versions of each stage. During the shorter version, some of the gimmicks and characters invented for that zone were held back for the longer one.

Aside from its troubled beginnings as an ill-advised kayaking game, the interview suggests that *Toobin'* development was plain sailing – well, plain 'toobin'' – and Dennis largely agrees, struggling to think of anything he disliked about the project. He brings up the dodgy home conversions, noting how their reliance on joysticks rather than *Track & Field*-style buttons made them "really poor and far too easy, distracting from the game", although this leads him to consider that perhaps, given the chance to go back, he'd actually change the way the arcade version's controls work: "I think

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

RETURN OF THE JEDI (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1984

HYDRA
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1990

PRIMAL RAGE
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1994



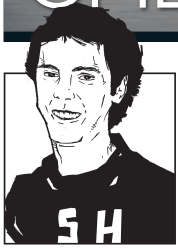
the controls confused people too much, especially initially, although I guess once people got used to them, they loved the way they worked. The controls were a real 'love it or hate it' thing," he muses. "But I have actually thought long and hard about this, and I might have done something with the 720-degree controller: you'd have been able to spin your guy around, and maybe have 'paddle' and 'back paddle' buttons… But that's just a 'what if', right?"

Despite that minor reservation, Dennis notes that *Toobin'* remains one of his favourite projects, and that the game sold well, despite being something of a luxury item. As a System II game, it had a high-resolution monitor, and the cabinet also had a fake waterfall (see 'Beer = creativity?'), thereby making it more expensive than many other arcade games. "If you were an arcade owner, you'd be asking why you're paying a thousand dollars more for this thing, and Atari was very cost-conscious in those days," remembers Dennis. "But *Toobin'* turned out to be a game we really splurged on, and it was a pretty good success for the company."

Toobin' was also a success for its creators, and Dennis refers to it as his 'epic', due to its wealth of playfields, depth and variety of characters. "It really was a labour of love for the team, and everyone really believed in the project," he says as we draw the interview to a close. "And people always remember the game. I was interviewing for a job at EA Canada and the general manager wanted to talk to me in person. I went to see him and he goes, 'You're the *Toobin'* guy, aren't you?' It turns out he had one in his house and loves the game, and so I guess it still opens some doors!"

CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learned about retro gaming it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can be picked up for less than a fiver…

SCRAPYARD DOG

- **SYSTEM:** LYNX
- **RELEASED:** 1991
- **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- **DEVELOPER:** CREATIVE SOFTWARE DESIGNS INC



» [Lynx] The game looks superb, although great-looking graphics were always one of the Lynx's fortes.

There is a ton of great games for the Atari Lynx and many can be snapped up for same price as a Ricky Martin discography. Darran covered Blue Lightning, the machine's adequate answer to Sega's After Burner, a few issues back and this month I thought I would pay a single-page tribute to one of my favourite games on the handheld. But while the game in question won't cost you the earth, because of its brilliance I feel duty-bound to warn you that it does find itself at the more affluent end of our Cheap As Chips pricing scale.

Scrapyard Dog was one of the few platform games released for the Lynx and, like the machine's launch title, *Electrocop*, is actually a remake of an older Atari 7800 game. In both 7800 and Lynx versions you play the role of a big-nosed junkyard owner called Louie whose dog, Scraps, has been kidnapped by an evil blue-van driver who calls himself Mr Big. Your mission is to rescue the hairy hound.

However, in a bid to stop the happy reunion, Mr Big has dispatched his crew of gangster rodents and dogs to hamper Louie's plight. He's also taken the art of teaching animal tricks to all-new nefarious heights by training most of them to dress in swanky suits and even use firearms. To help even out the odds a little, Louie is thankfully blessed with an infinite number of tin cans to lob at the enemies and clear a safe path to his furry friend.



» [Lynx] Scraps is stolen by Mr Big, and Louie is left to ponder what Mr Big could possibly want with his pooch.

Aside from the storyline, the most charming thing about *Scrapyard Dog* is just how wonderfully presented everything is. The game kicks off with a brilliant cartoon introduction that blends seamlessly into the colourful in-game animated world. With 24 stages to work through, hidden shops to visit, and secret bonus sections that are revealed by pressing down on random sections in each level, there is an astonishing amount of variety crammed into this game. There's even the odd driving section to keep you entertained.

Each of *Scrapyard Dog's* entertaining levels is so diverse that you'll want to see the game through to completion, which is lucky because it doesn't contain continues, meaning you'll be forced to play through it in a single sitting. Another niggle is the way that Louie fires his cans. Firing one immediately after the other wipes the first can off the screen and cancels out the attack – usually at the cost of a life. But these are only very small complaints in what is otherwise a quality platformer for the Atari handheld.

The difficulty level is pitched perfectly – never frustrating, but challenging enough to keep you coming back for more. And if you haven't yet had the opportunity to play *Scrapyard Dog* – or likewise if you used to be a fan of the 7800 original and had no idea that a portable update was even available – we strongly recommend you seek out the game. Two decades later, *Scrapyard Dog* remains incredibly playable and immensely addictive. It's certainly one Lynx game you won't find sitting on the scrap heap. Oh no.

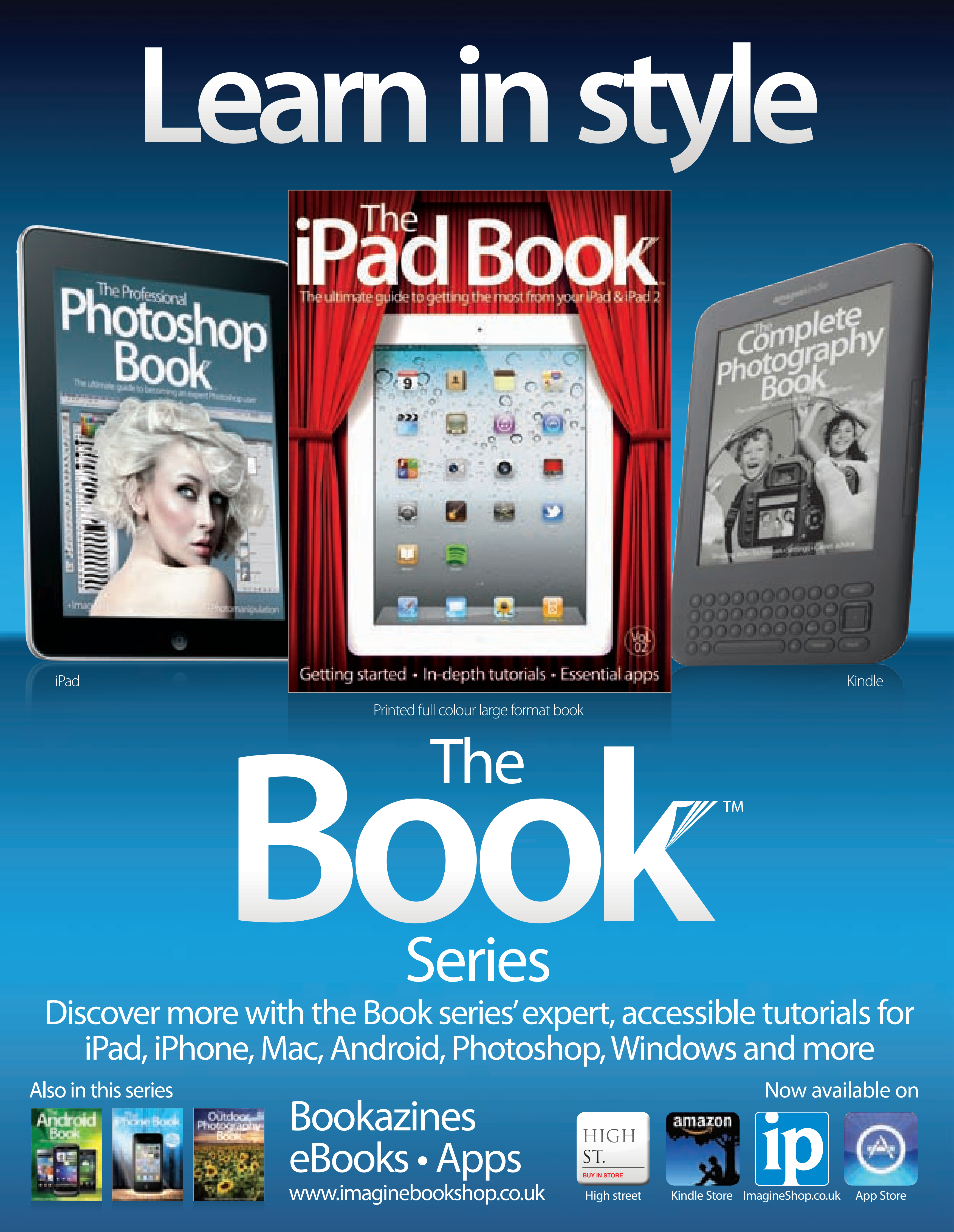




» [Lynx] The game features plenty of secrets to discover, such as shops to buy you extra time and power.



» [Lynx] *Scrapyard Dog* features some bizarre enemies, from stone-dropping pigeons to gundogs (geddit?).


Learn in style
The Professional Photoshop Book
The iPad Book
The ultimate guide to getting the most from your iPad & iPad 2
Getting started • In-depth tutorials • Essential apps
Vol 02
The Complete Photography Book
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Kindle
Printed full colour large format book
The Book™ Series
Discover more with the Book series' expert, accessible tutorials for iPad, iPhone, Mac, Android, Photoshop, Windows and more
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FROM THE ARCHIVES

RETRO GAMER DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

Elite Systems

Read all about it! Paperboy publisher Elite is celebrating 25 years in the business. David Crookes reflects on this influential company's contribution to gaming and asks what the future holds

The dictionary defines the world 'elite' as a group of people regarded to be the best in a particular society or organisation. So when Steve Wilcox named his company Elite, he really did have something to live up to. For at its inception, Elite Systems was a small team of inexperienced young people aiming to scale the heights of the gaming industry in order to beat older, more experienced hands.

And yet Steve, the company's co-founder, had wanted to make an impact. While it was a scenario and a dream shared up and down the country at the time by various talented young programmers, the fact that Elite went on to move among the best and brought some of the greatest arcade games to home computers certainly marked it out. If nothing else, Elite could spot a good licensing opportunity when it saw one.



It was Steve's brother Richard, however, who had got the ball rolling. Richard spent a sizeable chunk of 1983 toiling away in front of a cathode ray tube in order to churn out a computer game on the Spectrum called *Blue Thunder*. In April 1984 he was ready to reveal it to the world. Written to coincide with a film-cum-television series of the same name, and produced because he felt he could do a better job than many of the games already out there, Richard's jetcopter flying game was considered "generally excellent" by *Crash* magazine, which promptly awarded it a staggering 90 per cent. The game was published under the label 'Richard Wilcox Software', and Richard asked his father to help him market the game. It proved a major success as punters, turned on by its Game Of The Month status and favourable reviews, snapped it up in their droves.

It was the start of Richard's career as a games programmer and the precursor to the start of what would become a company that this year celebrates 25 years in the business. Eager to produce more titles, Richard and his father decided to employ another member of staff, and Steve was taken on to assist with marketing and the organisational overheads of running a software house. On 1 August they announced to the press that the name of the company was changing. And Elite Systems was born.

The company's first game under the new brand name was *Kokotoni Wilf*. It was intended to be the equal or perhaps better of *Jet Set Willy*, the well-loved game by Matthew Smith, a programmer both Steve and Richard admired for his innovative and fresh approach to gaming. Priced, like *Blue Thunder*, at £5.95, the game was set over six time zones between 965BC and 2001 and spanned 63 locations with the player taking control of Wilf on a mission to search for various pieces of a Dragon Amulet, fragments of which had been scattered through time.

Steve's marketing brain flew into overdrive and he vowed that the first 100 people who finished the game and sent Elite a note of the message that appeared on the final screen would receive a copy of the

INSTANT EXPERT

Elite began life as Richard Wilcox Software in April 1984, but the name of the company changed in the August when it expanded and took on more staff.

The first game produced under the Richard Wilcox Software label was *Blue Thunder*, and Matthew Smith-inspired *Kokotoni Wilf* was Elite's first release.

Elite's company motto was "Right product, right price, right time," and it released a host of popular games including *Airwolf*, *Commando* and *Ghosts 'N' Goblins*. All were arcade ports or based on popular licences.

The company didn't mind that its games would chart well one month and slip out the next, it was of the impression that long-lasting games would only delay them buying another title.

A young Ste Pickford produced the graphics for the Amstrad CPC version of *Ghosts 'N' Goblins*. Elite had loads of arcade cabs in its office to allow programmers to convert them to home machines.

Today Elite makes mobile phone games based on its old IP, including *Paperboy*, and works with all of the major phone networks.



BOMB JACK



company's next game, an officially licensed version of the 20th Century Fox television series *The Fall Guy*.

"I started to learn the value of intellectual property at around this time," says Steve. "There was this realisation that if you based games on existing IP then much of the ground work had been laid out and you were producing games on the back of names that had already had massive sums of money pumped into them or that had wide exposure on television. It may sound like an obvious business model, but it's one we pursued with great effect."

> **"Airwolf was most significant at that time because we had to conceive the game from scratch"**
>
> STEVE WILCOX, ELITE SOFTWARE CO-FOUNDER

TV Success

The company followed *The Fall Guy* with other licensed games that took inspiration from television, most notably *Airwolf*. Elite Systems had entered into a licence agreement with the Merchandising Corporation of America to commercialise the game as an official licensed product of the hit American television series. It was produced for a number of machines at the time, including Amstrad CPC and ZX Spectrum, of which both versions did well in the UK. Also achieving success in America was the Commodore 64 version, written and designed by Neil A Bate and Chris Harvey, with graphics by Chris Harvey and Rory Green, and music by Mark Cooksey. The first issue of *Zzap! 64* magazine awarded it 88 per cent, but it proved popular across the board. There were ports for the BBC Micro and the Atari series of 8-bit machines, which were adapted from Richard's *Blue Thunder*. Produced in mode two on the BBC, it was one of the few Micro games published by Elite and although the only real difference between the game and *Blue Thunder* was the actual title, the game was nevertheless well received. Interestingly, due to its similarities with the classic helicopter game *Fort Apocalypse* by Synapse Software in 1982, there were plans to rename *Airwolf* as *Fort Apocalypse 2* in Europe, but there was an eleventh-hour change of mind.

"*Airwolf* was a key game for us," says Steve. "It was certainly our most significant at that time because, with the majority of versions, we had to conceive the game from scratch and we weren't taking an existing IP and porting it across. One of the hard parts of producing *Airwolf* was creating it within the deadlines we'd set ourselves. We needed it to coincide with when the series was on television and so we had to really work hard on it."

Elite was beginning to make a major impact. With its company motto of "Right product, right price, right time", the firm was trying to position itself in a competitive market as quickly as it could and it had already taken on graphic designer Rory Green, series 65 programmer Neil Bate, Z80 programmers Andy Williams and Stephen Lockley, and administrators Paul Smith and Pat Maisey.

The company was also keen to protect itself and it was acutely aware of the problem of piracy so all of its games carried an inch-by-half-inch hologram of the company's logo on the cassette inlay cards and the idea was that any game that didn't carry this would be easily identifiable as having been pirated. Elite was also spending big. Lockley revealed that it would cost £15,000 to advertise a single program. He also revealed that, of the revenue from a game, the distributor would typically receive 50 per cent, the software house 45 per cent and the programmer five per cent, with ▶

BY THE NUMBERS

90 the percentage score given to Richard Wilcox by *Crash* magazine for *Blue Thunder*

25 the number of years Elite has been in business

5.95 the amount in pounds that Elite's first release cost

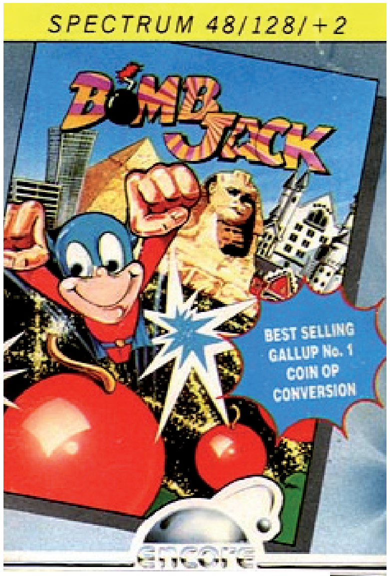
100 the number of people who got a free copy of *The Fall Guy* for finishing *Kokotoni Wilf*

15 the age of Ste Pickford when he produced the graphics for *Ghosts 'N' Goblins*

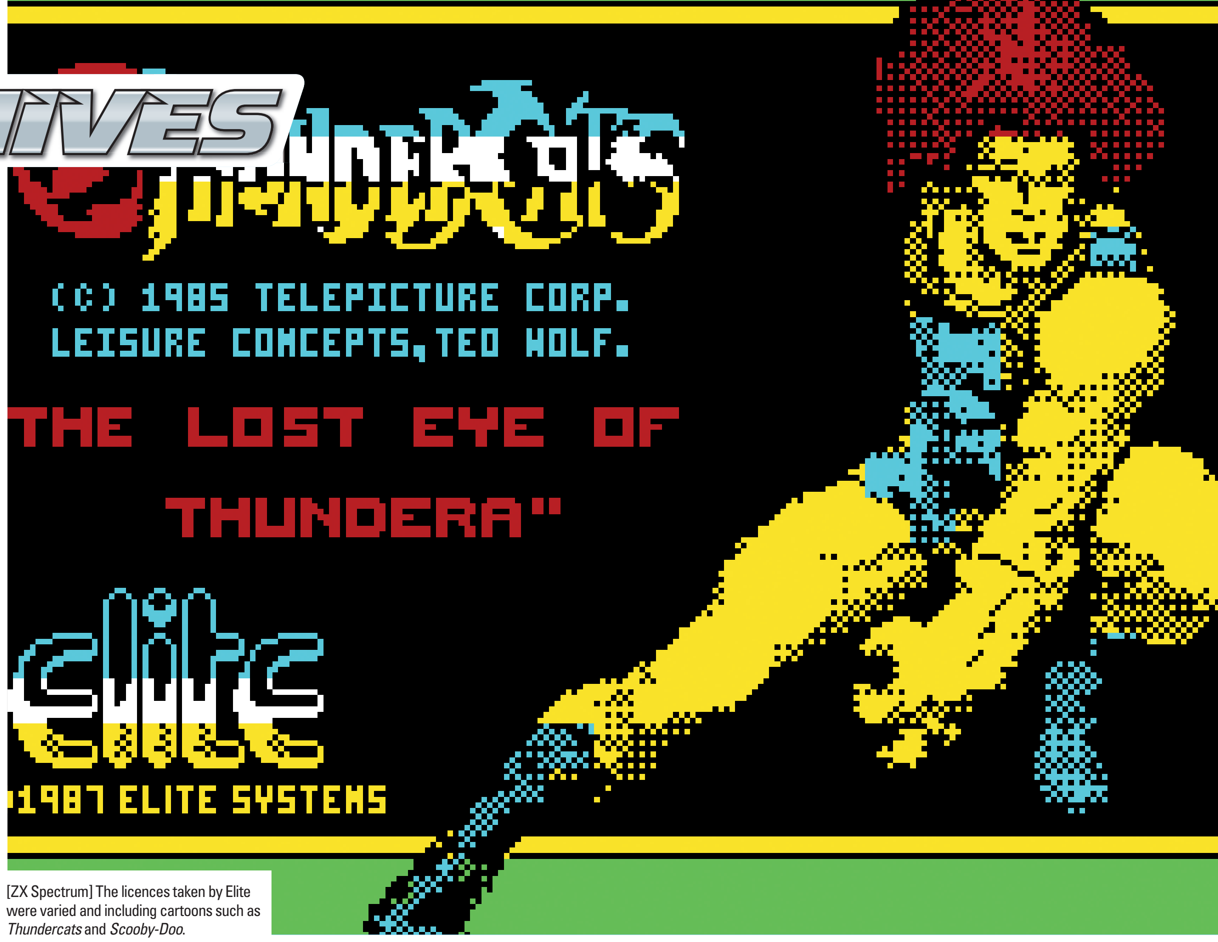
20,000 the number of copies sold of the CPC version of *Ghosts 'N' Goblins*

200,000 the number of copies sold of *Striker* for the SNES in 1994

100 the equivalent number of people employed full-time by Elite Software in its heyday



Elite also had a budget range called Encore. This cassette cover for *Bomb Jack* shows how Elite played on the coin-op credentials of some of its games.



[ZX Spectrum] The licences taken by Elite were varied and including cartoons such as *Thundercats* and *Scooby-Doo*.

the software house having to shell out for lighting, heating and renting of office space as well as other overheads.

Not all of Elite's licences were doing well, however. The Porsche driving game *911TS* was widely slammed and *Dukes Of Hazzard* was let down by poor programming. But they still went after them because they knew they would sell on name alone. But it was heartening for the team to see such games as *The Fall Guy* get a better reception and for *Grand National* to be handed a cool 80 per cent by *Sinclair User*. The team at Elite were also punching the air in delight at seeing *Frank Bruno's Boxing* ring up the sales and achieve commendable reviews in the gaming press. Not bad for what was actually an inferior version of the Japanese arcade game *Super Punch Out* trading on the heavyweight boxer's name.

"We were doing well in attracting so many licences at the time," says Steve. "We were all quite young, certainly less experienced than the guys over at Ocean Software,

> **"We were all quite young, certainly less experienced than the guys at Ocean"** STEVE WILCOX



Steve Wilcox says *Airwolf* was one Elite's finest games.

which was our major rival for licences. We crossed swords with them on many occasions and when we look back and reflect on the fact that the first game we produced was put together by four young fellas in a storeroom in a shop… it's amazing how far we were going. We'd be contacting film agencies direct, doing a deal for the licence and then turning them into games. Initially we were dealing with representatives of the major television companies in London, but within 18 months to two years, we were talking to executives in Los Angeles. They were exciting times."

During that time, Elite Systems had risen to the top. Its headquarters in Alderton was bursting at the seams with free-to-play arcade cabinets of videogames the firm was converting. And Elite was beating the likes of Ocean, US Gold and Melbourne House in the charts, having had most of the 12 best-sellers of 1985, primarily on the back of *Frank Bruno's Boxing*, *Airwolf* and *Commando*. Producing videogames based on coin-ops was becoming something of a forte of the company.

"We would approach all our games in the same way as film studios would approach their movies," says Steve. "We'd storyboard everything on A4. If we were converting a coin-op, we'd map everything properly and ensure the conversions were as accurate as possible. There was a certain formula to writing the game but it was one that worked and some may have claimed we were producing the pop music equivalent of games but that was the nature of the arcades. They were simple to play and you had no need to go away and read reams of paper before you could even grasp the joystick in your hand."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Steve Wilcox

Steve is still the managing director of Elite Systems. Although only a handful of staff remain at the company, he oversees a host of mobile phone conversions of new and existing Elite IP. Now a developer and a publisher, Steve's company has signed deals with all of the major mobile phone networks and it is also working to produce games for the Apple iPhone.

Ste Pickford

Both Ste (pictured) and his brother John went on to join Manchester-based Binary Design. They later set up Zippo Games to create Amiga, Atari ST and NES titles. In 1990, the company became Rare Manchester. The brothers moved to Software Creations, but later formed Zed Two, which was bought and then closed by Warthog, making the Pickfords redundant. The Stockport duo are now coding their own indie titles and selling them via their own online publisher Zee-3. Their latest game, *Naked War*, has attracted rave reviews.

Nigel Alderton

Creator of *Chuckie Egg* Nigel Alderton worked at Elite on a number of arcade conversions, including *Commando* (on Spectrum) and *Ghosts 'N' Goblins* (on Amstrad). Despite his teenage dreams of winning Wimbledon, today Nigel is a network manager and says he most admires Paul Holmes, the programmer of the Spectrum version of *Bomb Jack*, who was able to write beautiful code having broken down complex problems into component parts.

SIX OF THE BEST

Buggy Boy
(1988)
Elite was behind some cracking conversions on the 8-bit systems, but one of its best is easily the C64 port of *Buggy Boy*. It's a truly stunning effort that captures all the thrills and spills of the original arcade game. And it looks utterly fantastic to boot. All the home ports are impressive, but if you want to see Elite at the top of its game, you really need to track down *Buggy Boy*.

Paperboy
(1986)
It's telling that *Paperboy* is still being ported today. What it lacked in variety, it more than made up for with a fast and furious blast through various streets and assault courses in a fine conversion job to the 8-bit home computers. It wasn't Elite's finest hour, but it came damn close. All the conversions were of a very high standard, but we're particularly fond of the Amstrad outing.

Ghosts 'N' Goblins
(1987)
The graphics of the CPC version of *Ghost 'N' Goblins* were put together by none other than Ste Pickford in what was his first gaming gig. However, all versions produced by Elite looked great and played like a dream, even if they were incredibly tough at times. Some levels were dropped as the game was converted from the arcade, but the lack of numerous lives helped ensure it remained a challenge.

Frank Bruno's Boxing
(1985)
Based on *Punch-Out!!* and riding on the back of the boxer's popularity, *Frank Bruno's Boxing* packed a punch and found its way onto numerous 8-bit compilations. You viewed the action from behind Frank and so could throw your punches forwards and see the result of the impact. It was graphically terrible and some people hated it, but it had charm nonetheless, if you know what we mean… Harry.

Airwolf
(1985)
Airwolf, along with *Knight Rider*, *Street Hawk* and *The A-Team*, embodied the must-watch television of the Eighties and so it was inevitable someone would produce a game based upon it. You played Stringfellow Hawke and had to rescue five scientists while controlling the famous TV chopper. While it's a sharp and enjoyable game, it's also rather tough, so be prepared for a few frustrating moments.

Bomb Jack
(1984)
The original game was launched in 1984 and was a port of the *Tehkan* arcade game, selling 300,000 copies. Elite's 1987 sequel wasn't as much fun as the debut, but it showed that the company was willing to build upon the popularity of a successful game. Many **Retro Gamer** readers feel that the Spectrum received the best port, but we hold a special place in our hearts for the CPC outing.















1986: A Seminal Year

Elite found its game sales followed a similar pattern too. They would chart well, selling in droves upon release, but within a month, they would start dropping quickly, sometimes right out of the charts. Elite was not making games to last – it was producing titles that kids could be entertained by for a few weeks, then become bored of in time for Elite's next release.

"Our programmers were drawing on contemporary references and other successful games at that time," says Steve. "And when you look at the arcades, the same was true. It was all about short, sharp bursts of play and it worked for *Bomb Jack* and it worked for *Ghosts 'N' Goblins*."

Ghosts 'N' Goblins was the first professional work carried out by a young school pupil called Ste Pickford. He was 15 at the time and he was given the task of converting Capcom's classic coin-op game *Ghosts 'N' Goblins* for the Amstrad CPC. With a promise of £50 to produce all of the graphics, he worked with programmer Nigel Alderton who lived near Pickford in Stockport. "It wasn't easy," recalls Ste. "I had to convert the graphics from the arcade version on to the CPC, but I didn't have easy access to an arcade machine. Nigel gave me lots of photographs of the game being played so I was at least able to copy the background and the sprites, but the hard part was getting the levels right."

He adds: "I went to an arcade in Stockport with a notepad and pencil, but someone complained and after 20 minutes I was thrown out because the owner thought I was trying to rip off one of his cabinets. I told Nigel this and he picked me up and drove me to Elite's offices miles away. He ended up playing the game through while I made notes and I just remember looking around the office while Nigel got stuck with the game and seeing all of these boxes and posters of Elite games scattered around. I was tempted to grab some games I didn't have, but Nigel told me I couldn't."

Released in 1986, the CPC version sold 20,000 copies and the other ports of the arcade game also did incredibly well. That year proved to be a seminal one for Elite. It was also the year in which the company gained the rights to publish *Paperboy*, based on the 1984 Atari classic, and it would end up on all of the major systems at the time – indeed, it would be produced for systems for years to come. Across Europe and Australasia, more than a million copies were sold, with the company producing versions for the BBC Micro, Acorn Electron, C64, C16, CPC, Spectrum, Apple II, TRS-80 Color Computer, DOS, Apple IIGS, NES, Game Boy (and later Game Boy Color), Atari ST, Amiga, Atari Lynx, Master System, Game Gear and Mega Drive. A sequel, *Paperboy 2*, followed.

"It says a lot that we still publish *Paperboy* today," says Steve. "Three to four years ago we published it as mobile game and sequel and now we're in the advanced stage of an iPhone version. I think it did so well and has proved so enduring that, even now, people find it hard to identify another game like it. It was an unusual perspective for a game and it was so simple. It had that delightful combination – it was unique and enduring."

COMBATING PIRATES

Elite was so concerned about piracy that in the December 1984 issue of *Crash* magazine, programmer Stephen Lockley responded to two letters concerning the subject, telling readers: "If a home user can break into a program to copy it then the programmer hasn't done his job of protecting his product and therefore should not complain about such pirating." Interestingly, Lockley went on to dismiss the argument that people pirate games due to the price of software. "If the price of software was dropped, the quality would suffer and so would the customer," he said. "This would be due to a decrease in the number of software houses and the competitiveness of the market."



[ZX Spectrum] Piracy meant no game was safe. Not even *Mike Reid's Pop Quiz*.



Awards & Glory

In 1986, Elite, was awarded Software House Of The Year by *Computer & Video Games* magazine in 1986. A year later, Elite was awarded Game Of The Year for *Paperboy*, by the British software industry. But if Elite was



[C64] The Commodore 64 port of *Buggy Boy* is truly amazing.

THREE TO AVOID



A Question Of Sport (1988)

Back in the Eighties, when the BBC's *A Question of Sport* was proving a massively popular gameshow, Elite thought that it was on to a winner when it decided to shoehorn David Coleman and his panel of sporting legends into a game. Graphically poor and lacking in variety, *A Question Of Sport* was made all the worse by having a stupidly low difficulty level.



Dragon's Lair (1992)

If you try your hand at *Dragon's Lair* on the NES, **Retro Gamer** will not be responsible for your wasted time, and nor will we be able to refund your wasted money. It may have been faithful to the original in terms of the storyline, but it was all too easy to die – you might say inexplicably so – and we don't think anyone has actually ever completed it. In fact, no one would want to.



911TS (1985)

Some people claimed to have tapped in better magazine type-ins, the rest stated that this game simply lacked that old va-va-vroooooooooom… Whatever the reasons, *911TS* used the same scrolling routine as *Grand National* and made no effort to use any of the sponsorship cash Dunlop must have put its way. It was a very tyre-d game. (We can only apologise.)

frustrated by anything, it was its increasing inability to produce unique games. The flood of licences meant the company was knee deep in interpreting other companies' IP or mirroring coin-op games. For this reason it tied up a deal with Gargoyle Games – producer of in-depth titles such as *Tir Na Nog* – to write from scratch a rather more lightweight title based on *Scooby-Doo*. It was released on 1986 to favourable reviews. Still, Steve's focus was on coin-op conversions. "There was no getting away from it. We were working with Capcom and Atari and many others and we were seeing them produce some amazing games that were perfect for conversion. At that time we had no in-house programmers and we had two designers, but we were knocking the games out and aiming to produce as many as 20 games a year, making use of a pool of 40 freelance programmers that enabled us to turn games around incredibly quickly. We knew arcade games were our strength so we played to it."

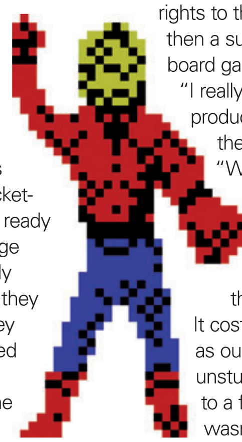
In June 1986, Elite announced it was going to start a budget label that would

> **"I remember a senior guy at Amstrad telling me the future for home computers was not good"** STEVE WILCOX



Two versions of *Ikari Warriors* existed on the C64. Get John Twiddy's version. It's brilliant.

feature many old 8-bit favourites, including *Valhalla*, *Skool Daze* and *Full Throttle*. It wasn't going to just publish its own games – it had acquired the rights to the back catalogue of companies such as Psion and PSS and the idea was that the games would sell for a pocket-friendly £2.99. With 100 back titles ready and waiting, the £2.99 Classics range would include games that previously sold at full price. The idea was that they would publish one every week. They sold well and the range was deemed a success, but by the late-Eighties and going into the early-Nineties, the 8-bit home computers were losing



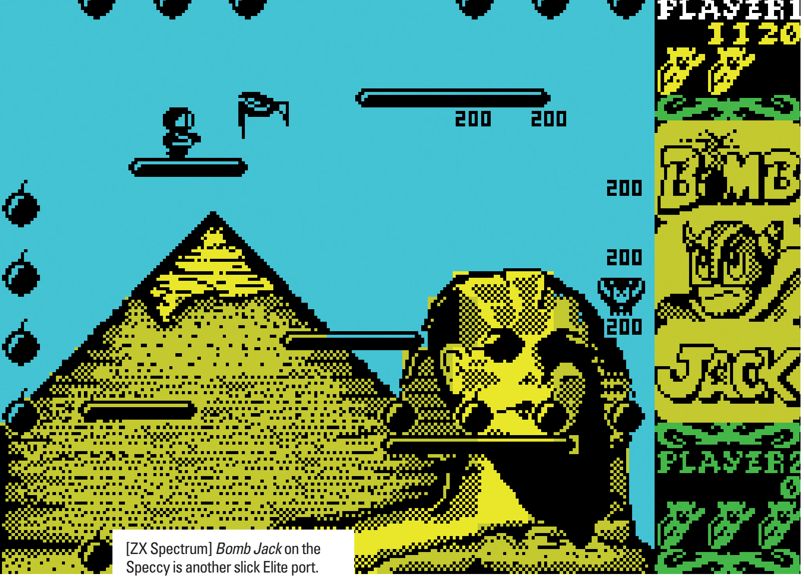
their spark and it was time for Elite to begin looking towards consoles in order to move the business forward.

In 1988, it had lost money trying to emulate the success of Domark's *Trivial Pursuit*. Steve liked what he saw with the conversion of the popular board game and so he decided to take what he thought would be a sure-fire gamble and snap up the rights to the BBC's *A Question Of Sport*, then a successful television show and board game.

"I really thought we'd be able to produce a good game based on the franchise," admits Steve. "We took the licence for more money than we should have and we had a nightmare putting it together, trying to get it done with deadlines that we just couldn't meet. It cost us a pretty penny as well as our reputation and we came unstuck. We thought we were on to a foolproof conversion but it wasn't to be."

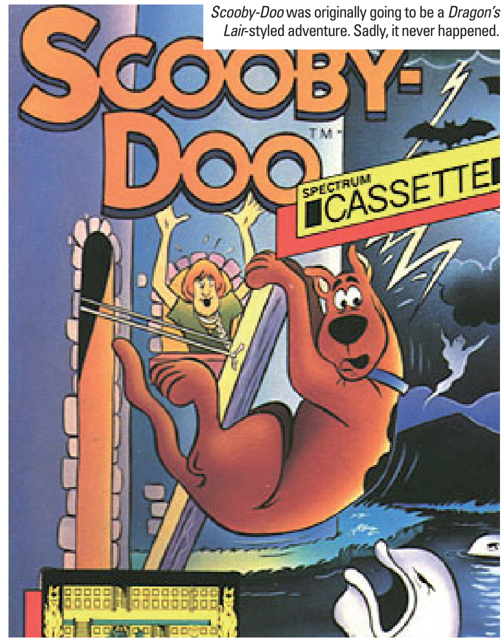
TIMELINE

- **1984** – RICHARD WILCOX SOFTWARE IS FORMED AND RELEASES *BLUE THUNDER*
- **1984** – COMPANY CHANGES ITS NAME TO ELITE SYSTEMS AND RICHARD'S BROTHER STEVE JOINS THE FIRM. *KOKOTONI WILF* IS LAUNCHED AND *AIRWOLF* IS RELEASED
- **1985** – ARCADE GAME COMMANDO IS PORTED TO HOME COMPUTERS AND PUBLISHED BY ELITE
- **1986** – *GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS* AND *PAPERBOY* RECEIVE WIDESPREAD ACCLAIM AND ELITE IS AWARDED SOFTWARE HOUSE OF THE YEAR BY *COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES* MAGAZINE
- **1987** – A PROPOSED £2.99 CLASSICS RANGE RUNS INTO CONTROVERSY OVER NON-PAYMENTS
- **1988** – *PAPERBOY* IS AWARDED GAME OF THE YEAR BY THE BRITISH SOFTWARE INDUSTRY
- **1988** – ELITE LOSES MONEY AFTER PUBLISHING A GAME BASED ON THE BBC'S *A QUESTION OF SPORT*
- **1990** – ELITE SIGNS A DEAL WITH NINTENDO, AND *DRAGON'S LAIR* BECOMES A SUCCESS FOR THE NES
- **1994** – *STRIKER* – PRODUCED WITH RAGE SOFTWARE – SELLS 200,000 COPIES ON THE SNES
- **1995** – PLAYSTATION GAINS IN POPULARITY AND TAKES ELITE UNAWARE SINCE IT HEAVILY INVESTED IN NINTENDO. ELITE SIGNS DEAL WITH SONY
- **1998** – ASSOCIATE COMPANY MOTIVETIME DEVELOPS THE RACING GAME *TEST DRIVE: OFF-ROAD* AND *GRAND TOURING* FOR KUMYANG
- **1999** – MOTIVETIME PRODUCES *FORD RACING*
- **2001** – DEAL SIGNED WITH NINTENDO ALLOWING ELITE TO WORK ON GAME BOY ADVANCE

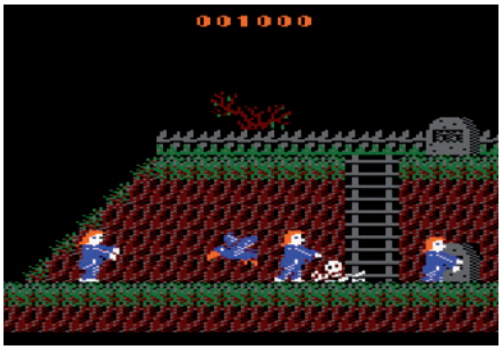


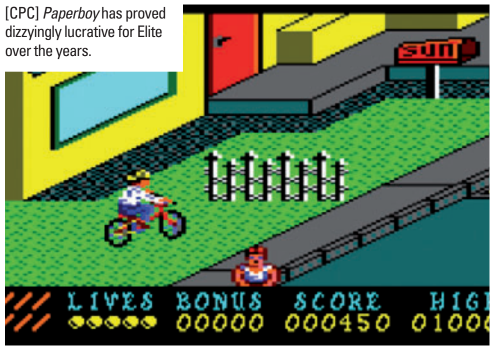
[ZX Spectrum] *Bomb Jack* on the Speccy is another slick Elite port.





Scooby-Doo was originally going to be a *Dragon's Lair*-styled adventure. Sadly, it never happened.





[CPC] *Paperboy* has proved dizzyingly lucrative for Elite over the years.

Negotiating The Nineties

In 1990, Elite Systems became one of the first publishers in Europe to sign an agreement with Nintendo in order to develop games for the NES. And two years later, it negotiated with the Bank of NT Butterfield, based in Bermuda, which gave it credit amounting to £2 million, allowing it to pay for the importing of videogame cartridges from Japan. Indeed, Elite made a good go of producing games for Nintendo machines, and in 1994 it announced that *Striker* – which was produced with Rage Software – had sold 200,000 copies on the SNES and had therefore raked in £6 million worth of sales.

"By this point, our negotiating skills were good," says Steve. "In fact, we'd had a steep learning curve because it wasn't that easy to demo Spectrum games in North America. Luckily, the guys that we were dealing with were more wary of sorting out the legal aspects, and they would leave the actual game market to us. It was strange, really – one day they would be licensing a game, the next day perhaps an umbrella or something else entirely. We had also been to Japan on a number of occasions, visiting the early JAMMA shows in Tokyo and meeting with manufacturers from Atari to Namco as one of only a handful of British representatives. It's fair to say that the majority of coin-op games that were produced in the Eighties had significant demand and we hung on to the coat-tails of Atari and Capcom to some extent."

The culture shock of working with Nintendo was stark. Elite went from producing tapes that cost between 30p and 50p to produce and then suddenly had to bulk buy 20,000 cartridges at up to £12 a time. "But we had to do it," says Steve. "I remember a senior guy at Amstrad telling me in 1990 that the future for home computers was not good. There was a lack of enthusiasm in Britain to go on and produce the Spectrums and Amstrads of the Nineties, and the attention for gaming was switching to consoles. Yet the indigenous manufacturers were getting cold feet or had been badly bitten."

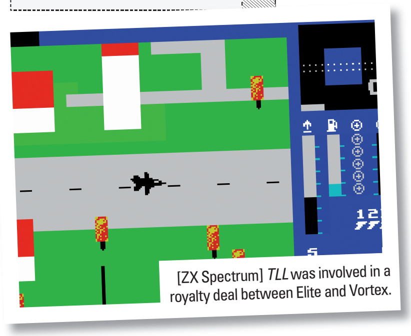
Elite's decision to commit itself to Nintendo proved a bad move. The company had put lots of money into producing games for the Japanese company's consoles. In 1995, however, the PlayStation began to smash the once-strong hold Nintendo and Sega had on the market and it was becoming clear to Steve that his company had backed the wrong horse.

"I made an error," he says. "We had so much cash in stock with Nintendo that we ended up just writing off the investment and taking the working capital out. The new products were becoming expensive to make too – there was a shift to three dimensions and we weren't best placed to keep up. It caused the demise of the business at the time. It wasn't overnight, it was over several years, but we had to change from a publisher to a developer in order to survive."

- **2002** – ELITE BEGINS TO DEVELOP JAVA GAMES FOR MOBILE PHONES
- **2003** – DEAL SIGNED WITH VODAFONE. OTHERS FOLLOW…
- **2007** – ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NEW *PAPERBOY* SERIES OF PORTS
- **2009** – ELITE CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

£2.99 CLASSICS

The £2.99 Classics range caused major controversy and at the turn of 1987, reports suggested that advanced royalty deals were not being delivered as promised. Luke Andrews, a director of Vortex, said he was allowing Elite to publish *TLL*, *Cyclone* and *Android II* but had heard nothing from the company. Meanwhile, CP Software – which had agreed a deal for backgammon, bridge, chess and draughts for the Spectrum and Amstrad computers – was also angry and issued a writ. Elite's Steve said it was just normal business practice and the issue was later resolved.



[ZX Spectrum] *TLL* was involved in a royalty deal between Elite and Vortex.



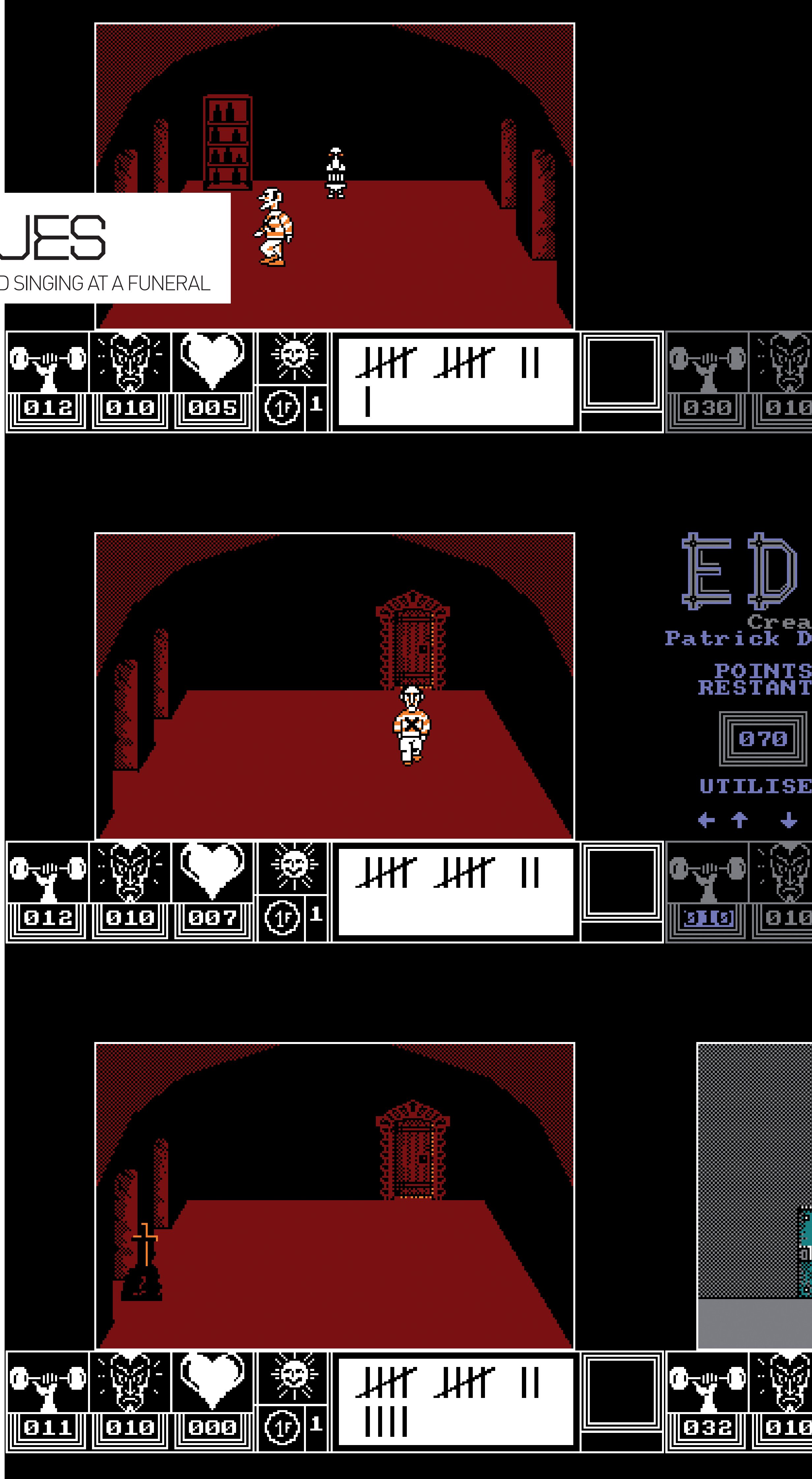
Elite Goes Mobile

Even so, Elite signed a deal with Sony Computer Entertainment Europe in 1995 and its associate company Motivetime developed the racing game *Test Drive: Off-Road* for Accolade. It developed the racing game *Grand Touring* for Korean company Kumyang in 1998, producing *Ford Racing* in 1999, began working with the Game Boy Advance in 2001 and, a year later, began to develop and publish Java games for mobile phones, signing a deal with Vodafone in 2003. Today the company continues to produce a host of mobile phone games, many based on the IP it has acquired over the years. This year it celebrates 25 years in the industry, having made a major impact on the history of British videogaming.

"In all that time, we have moved just ten miles away from where we started," says Steve, whose company is now based in Lichfield, Staffordshire. "I am proud of what we have achieved at Elite," Steve adds. "We have built up a huge bank of great videogames that continue to be popular today and we believe we helped to make gaming affordable with our budget labels Encore and Hit-Pak. Being able to get stuck into top-quality IP today like *Aliens Vs Predator* and *Paperboy* is an absolute joy." And we couldn't agree more.

EDEN BLUES

AS DEPRESSING AS RADIOHEAD SINGING AT A FUNERAL





- **PUBLISHER:** ERE INFORMATIQUE
- **RELEASED:** 1987
- **GENRE:** ACTION-ADVENTURE
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** CPC
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



HISTORY

For me, Eden Blues was a strange CPC title because, while I could never get very far in it, I just couldn't stop myself from popping it into my CPC, waiting patiently for it to load, and trying my best to fathom what the hell was going on. I knew the game was great, but couldn't put my finger on why. It was like watching a foreign-language film that looked great but didn't have any subtitles.

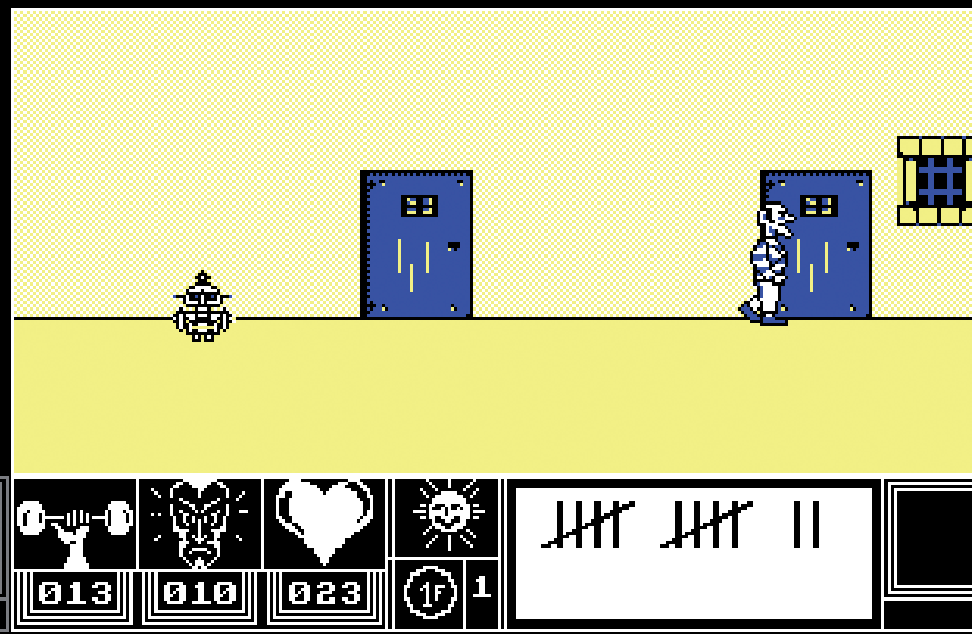
I was drawn to *Eden Blues'* unnervingly bleak, adult atmosphere. And despite my initial moaning about not having a clue what I was supposed to be doing, with hindsight the mission was simple. You had to escape a prison run by droids and automated prison wardens.

Returning to the game after all these years, certain things have changed. For one, the game feels less adult to me now (no surprise there), and using the skills I've acquired since our encounter, I also managed to progress deeper into the game's labyrinthine screens.

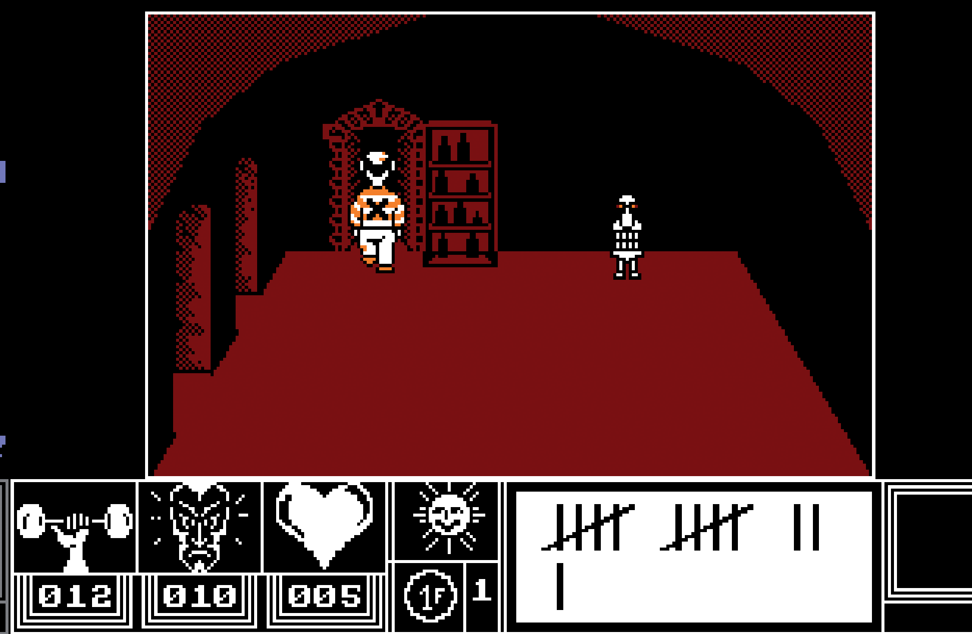
To give you a quick run down, you begin the game with various attribute points, which you can assign to your health, strength, and stamina, and I've also discovered that to see anything living after the first few rooms, you need to ramp up your strength and health stats. The gameplay is much simpler than I remember. You escape rooms by kicking them in, this in turn drops your strength levels, which must be replenished by drinking bottles, all while avoiding the guards to find a way out. And the game's protagonist is a bit of a wimp, hitting the walls, walking into beds, or touching anything that isn't made of air knocks down his energy levels. And some enemies can drain your health simply by being in the same room, which makes for some frantic moments when you dash to the nearest door to escape them.

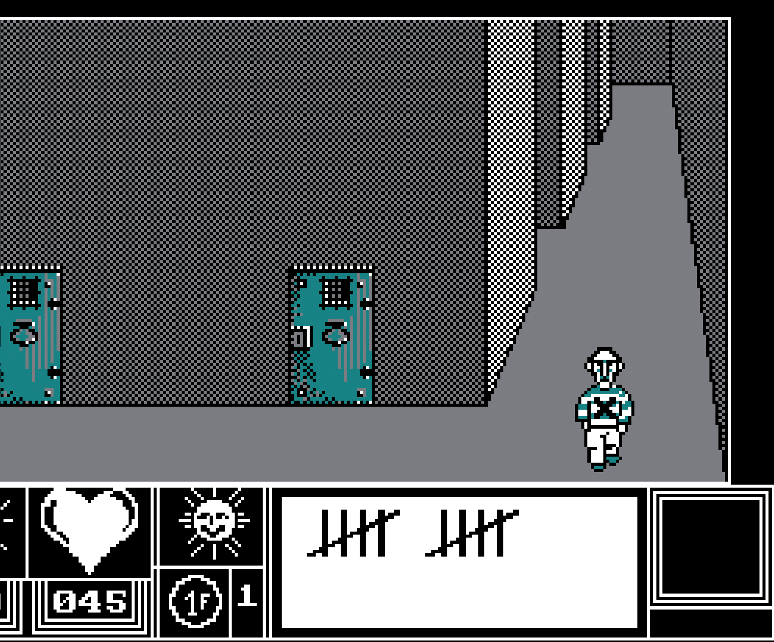
Actually, you know what, I think I may have actually fallen in love with *Eden Blues* again.

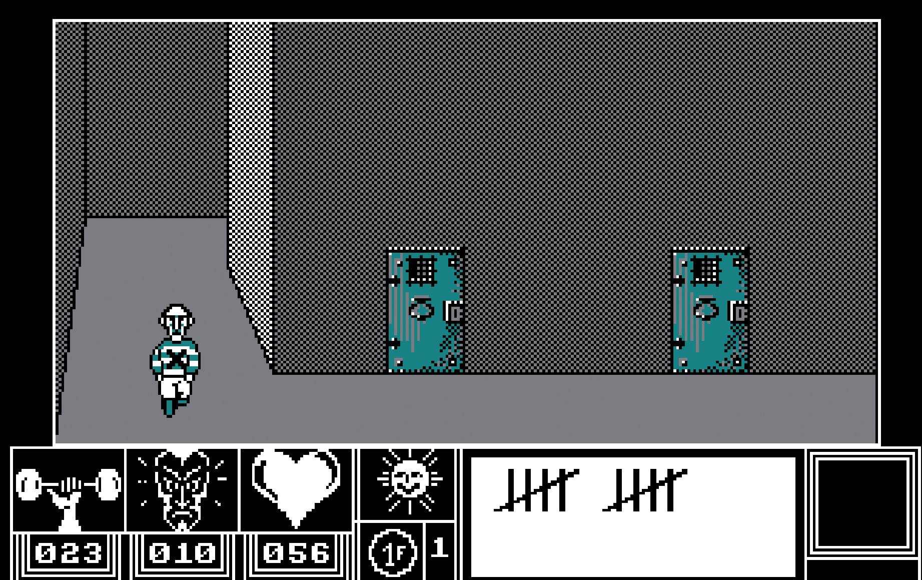

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THE MAKING OF

SUPER METROID







15 years on from the release of this legendary Super Famicom classic, Jonti Davies visits Nintendo HQ to scale the summit of the Metroid series with director Yoshio Sakamoto



» Sakamoto also directed *Metroid Fusion* and *Zero Mission*.

IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO

» **DEVELOPER:** R&D1/INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS

» **RELEASED:** 1994

» **GENRE:** SCI-FI ADVENTURE

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10

Heading back up to ground level as I leave the immaculate subway at Jujo Station in the south of Kyoto, I walk through this remarkably unremarkable suburb until I see the big white block that houses Nintendo's contemporary headquarters. The gates to NCL are manned by two portly, middle-aged guards who seem to project a faintly threatening presence, which is comically undone as I notice, behind them, in the back of their little booth, a stash of NCL-manufactured toy guns apparently left over from the Seventies and a selection of Nintendo character plushes from the Famicom era. This may not be the original Nintendo HQ site, but it clearly retains the company's history like a hoarding retro gamer hangs on to loose carts.

Inside, beyond the pristine lawns and shiny entrance, I enter a marble-floored, austere world whose foyer is staffed by painfully polite and correctly spoken Nintendo officials. Eventually I'm led into a meeting room on the ground floor, where I sip the o-cha kindly provided by the demure NCL woman as I wait – and slightly nervously revise my notes and cue my Dictaphone – until a smiling, ponytailed artist type arrives and immediately makes his introduction. This is Yoshio Sakamoto, producer of *Super Metroid* back in the early Nineties and still an integral Nintendo developer today. "Hajimemashite. Yoroshiku onegai shimasu."

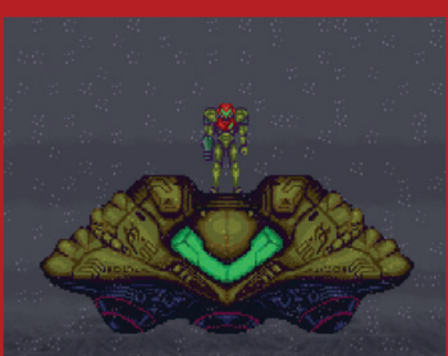
Sakamoto has brought with him a small booklet containing an overview of *Super Metroid* to aid his memory – the game was completed 15 years ago, but the *Metroid* legacy stretches back two decades – as we chat.

"To start with, there was the Famicom *Metroid* game," he recalls. Sakamoto worked on that first *Metroid* adventure, and its relevance to *Super Metroid* is particularly important because of the unchanging core concept of the 2D *Metroid* games; a core that was formed in said Famicom Disk System original of 1986.

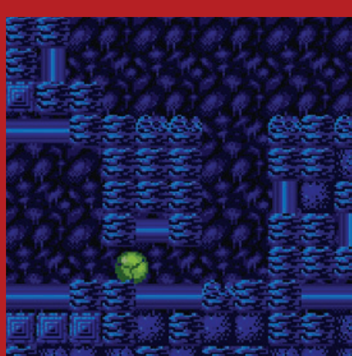
"My boss [producer Makoto Kanoh] told me that *Metroid* was really popular in North America, so he encouraged me to produce a new *Metroid* game with the high-quality graphics that were becoming possible thanks to the Super Famicom. Of course I said, 'Yes, I'd like to try doing that.' The game design and concept had already been established before *Metroid II* was produced for the Game Boy," Sakamoto explains. "When it came to making another sequel, this time for the Super Famicom, we really wanted to see how far we could push the SFC to generate greater power of expression and enhance the appearance of the game world, all while working with a basically unchanged concept. That was our initial motivation as far as *Super Metroid* was concerned: to build on the expressiveness of *Metroid II* and achieve greater presence, something closer to a reality."

Sakamoto had nothing to do with the development of *Metroid II* – at the time his services were required elsewhere within NCL – yet that sophomore title in part shaped the plan for *Super Metroid*: "As the last scene depicted Baby Metroid being born right in front of Samus's eyes… well… there's no real explanation for that in the course of the games, but that scene was another source of incentive for us in that we wanted to follow on from that ending, linking *Metroid II* with *Super Metroid*. We were determined to keep the same world-view and maintain the continuity of the story."

Aside from the basic formula of play that was set in motion by *Metroid*,

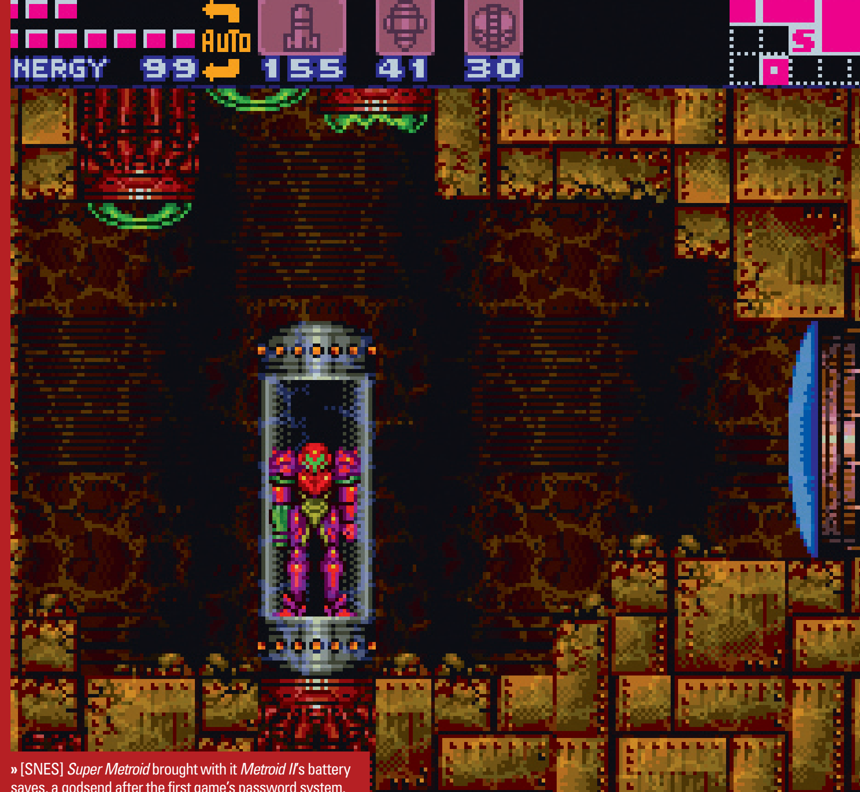


» [SNES] Zebes was an atmospheric setting, with a variety of environments given life by the new SNES hardware.



» [SNES] The iconic Morph Ball has its roots in the lo-fi NES's inability to convincingly animate a crawling Samus.

THE MAKING OF… SUPER METROID



» [SNES] *Super Metroid* brought with it *Metroid II*'s battery saves, a godsend after the first game's password system.

The series

Metroid
(FDS/NES/GBA – 1986)
The *Metroid* series was born on disk, not cartridge. It began life as this 1986-vintage Famicom Disk System title before migrating to the silicon of NES carts for consumption in the West. Videogames' first internationally famous heroine was born here. (An emulated version can be found in the GameCube release of *Metroid Prime*.)

Metroid II: Return Of Samus
(Game Boy – 1992)
This monochrome curio transported Samus to the Metroid homeworld of SR388, its dramatic finale providing Sakamoto and team with a bridge into the events of *Super Metroid*. It may not be as pretty as its relatives, but *Return Of Samus* remains an essential experience for the family's admirers.

Super Metroid
(SNES – 1994)
Arguably the finest game in the *Metroid* series, this 16-bit creation brought 2D adventure gaming to a new level of sophistication. *Super Metroid*'s pacing and world design are by all measures perfect, and there are so many aspects to explore here that the game retains its unique allure 15 years on.

Metroid Fusion
(GBA – 2002)
Taking the *Super Metroid* template into the 21st Century, and again with Yoshio Sakamoto at the creative helm, *Metroid Fusion* found Samus once more facing the destruction of a game world. Only this time Samus was the knowing perpetrator.

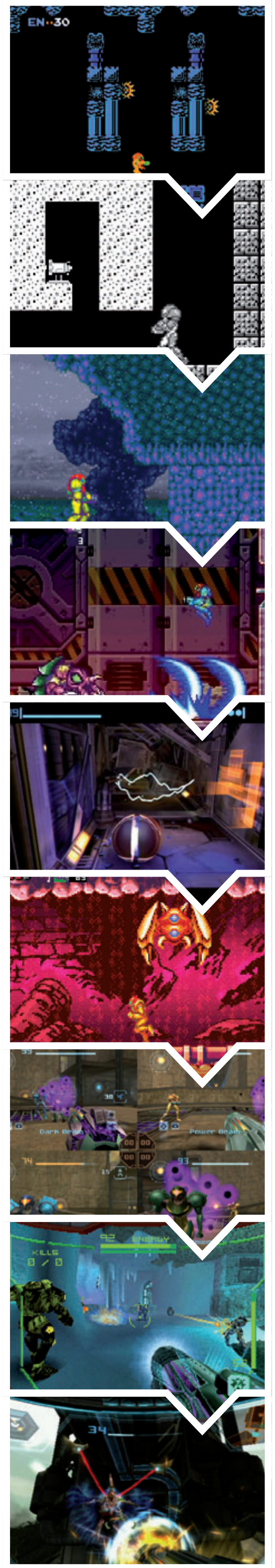
Metroid Prime
(GameCube – 2002)
Retro Studios' first-person adventure spin on the *Metroid* template sold 1.5 million copies in the United States alone, yet it simultaneously pushed Samus Aran away from Japanese sensibilities, guaranteeing a future of Western success at the cost of *Metroid*'s Japanese heritage. *Prime*'s unusual perspective and restrained style of first-person play carved out a niche for Samus in the next generation, cleverly sidestepping the FPS genre to find new ground.

Metroid: Zero Mission
(GBA – 2004)
Zero Mission's retelling of the first *Metroid* game brought with it a *Fusion*-standard graphical upgrade. By this stage Samus's popularity in her homeland was at an all-time low, and sales didn't reach six figures in Japan; a shame, as *Zero Mission* was even better than the FDS original.

Metroid Prime 2: Echoes
(GameCube – 2004)
The first *Metroid* game to feature a multiplayer mode, although its inclusion was perhaps ill-advised, as it failed to really add anything of worth to the traditional single-player adventure. *Echoes*' greatest successes were in translating more of Samus's abilities to a 3D context.

Metroid Prime: Hunters
(DS – 2006)
Developed by NST, the outfit behind titles such as *Ridge Racer 64* and *Wave Race: Blue Storm*, *Hunters* was one of the better first-person DS games, with a multiplayer mode that felt more natural than that of *Echoes*. However, compared with joypad-controlled *Metroid* predecessors, *Hunters*' touch-screen controls resulted in a slightly lower-than-average level of overall satisfaction.

Metroid Prime 3: Corruption
(Wii – 2007)
The final release in the *Prime* trilogy effectively brought the modern *Metroid* experience closer in line with the FPS genre, combining Remote-directed shooting and relentless action.



the code on that million-selling disk also plotted the aesthetic direction of the series. I suggest to Sakamoto-san that *Super Metroid* and the *Metroid* games in general don't look like 'typical' NCL games and I ask him why that might be. He sips his tea and then replies: "I think the film *Alien* had a huge influence on the production of the first *Metroid* game. All of the team members were affected by HR Giger's design work, and I think they were aware that such designs would be a good match for the *Metroid* world we had already put in place. To be honest, I've never really been clear on what is or isn't the 'Nintendo look', but as far as we were concerned, we were just projecting another image from within Nintendo – another face of Nintendo, if you like. But yes, it's a science-fiction game, so…"

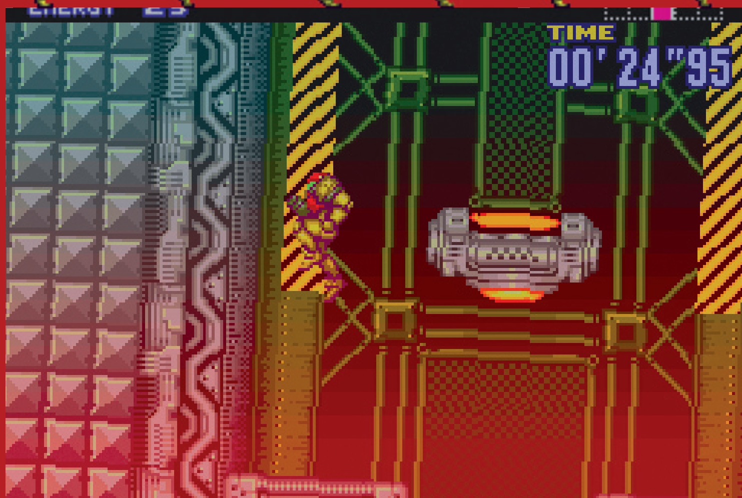
Other than the artistic influence of Necronom, Sakamoto reckons that numerous games affected the style of *Super Metroid* – "I can't list them… There are just too many of them" – although he counters this by highlighting the experimental side of his team's early work: "For the prototype stage of *Super Metroid*'s development we just had a few Intelligent Systems programming staff, myself, and another [in-house] Nintendo designer. We examined what was possible in the game, and as the core *Metroid* system was already in place we considered how we could make the game easier to play, what new ideas we could incorporate, and so on… Then we drafted in lots of other NCL and IntSys developers once we got beyond that stage and into the proper work."

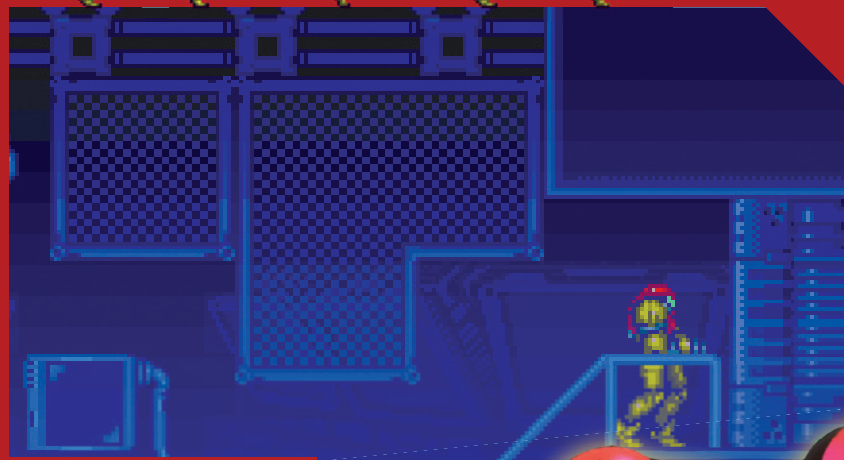
There has always been a complex yet mutually beneficial relationship between Nintendo, then based in Higashiyama (to the northeast of the current Minami location), and Intelligent Systems, constantly situated in the eastern Kyoto ward of Higashiyama. Sakamoto refers to the team as "IntSys" and says that it had been helping Nintendo with the *Metroid* series since the initial FDS game, "as a second-party developer". While it's fair to say that the game design and play-testing abilities of NCL's in-house staff have always been some of the world's best, Intelligent Systems' developers were on hand to provide indispensable technical know-how, particularly focused on the hardware side of things.

"IntSys has always been very capable with hardware," Sakamoto adds, "so during the experimental stage we told the IntSys programmers what kinds of things we wanted to do and verified what in reality could be done. We'd been well prepared for the move to the Super Famicom hardware, so we had some idea of what to expect before we went into it; which features we should use, and how. I think it was good that we went through the prototype stage because it gave us a base onto which the post-

> "The nap room wasn't being cleaned at all. One morning staff woke us up and told us that the room smelled like a zoo"







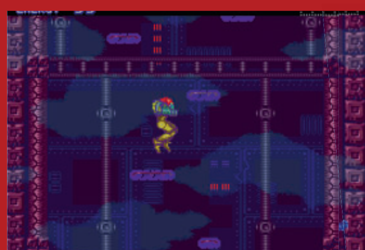
» [SNES] The open-ended gameplay meant that *Super Metroid* has become popular for speed runs.



experimental stage staffers could easily begin their work. At the time, the SFC was reputed to be difficult to develop for. Depending on how you partitioned the Super Famicom's video RAM, which looked after the sorting of image information, the scope of possibilities would change wildly. Knowing that you could diminish the VRAM's potential by poor partitioning was useful information, because it meant we could think about how certain things could or couldn't be achieved, and how we could work around those limitations. As we were migrating from the Famicom to Super Famicom, really everyone – not just Nintendo but other developers too – seemed to be having fun testing the feature set of the new hardware. That went for us, too: I remember often thinking, 'Oh, I had no idea we could even do this!' The graphics and sound were fantastic, but we were still driven by wanting to [not] be outdone by the arcade games of the time."

To a man, the developers supplied by IntSys to work on *Super Metroid* were all programmers. In spite of the various backgrounds of the *Super Metroid* team, there was apparently no NCL-IntSys rivalry; no factions, just harmony and productive co-operation. Key team members from the Nintendo side included Makoto Kanoh, the producer, the guy who instigated the project; my interviewee, Yoshio Sakamoto, who was the director in charge of game design; and Tomomi Yamane, who was the figure Sakamoto regards as having been the 'main' designer: "He was very skilled and was particularly interested in the hardware stuff, consulting with the IntSys people as to what kind of images could be displayed."

Even though the team's objective was to build on the success of



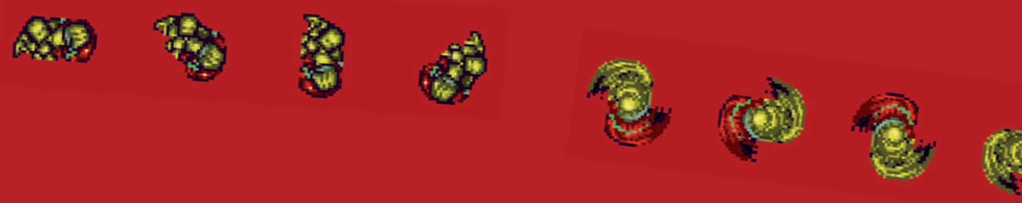


» [SNES] *Super Metroid* used the full range of special effects available to the SNES for its bosses and environments.

Metroid and *Metroid II*, only three of the original *Metroid* team, including Sakamoto himself, worked on *Super Metroid*: "The rest of the [NCL side] was made up of young trainee developers," he recalls. "Of course young people can be quite impertinent – and those on the *Super Metroid* team certainly were – but I think that's quite important in a way. These young people had enough about them to help us a lot. There were many different personalities in the *Super Metroid* team, which was a good thing. It was a harsh development environment, so I'm sure that some of the staff didn't enjoy the work, but generally the team was full of the 'Let's go for it!' spirit. I think that was partly because of the timing as well, what with the Super Famicom pushing everything to the next level."

The "next level" wasn't merely the notion of advanced graphics and sound: it was also a matter of the expansion and improvement of level design. However, Sakamoto and team were reluctant to drag *Super Metroid* into the realm of storytelling methods utilised by RPGs and other adventure games. "We really didn't want to explain things to the player using too many words," Sakamoto states. "We just wanted to let them play and be able to work things out for themselves. For example, say there's a mechanism where you need to climb up a ladder and place a bomb there in order to advance, as one component in the solution of a [gameplay] riddle; if that was all you needed to do in order to get through to the next area, you'd miss all of the other mechanisms we'd put in place and wouldn't even realise that certain parts of the game existed. We wanted players to explore everything we'd made and then move on. That's why we designed the maps in such a way that the player couldn't escape without exploration, or in such a way that the player would end up back at a starting point before advancing. The player would be cornered/driven and would eventually be forced to stop and say, 'Right, how should I think about this area?' That's the essential point of *Super Metroid*'s map design. Not using words meant that the player had to 'feel' his/her

SUPER METROID



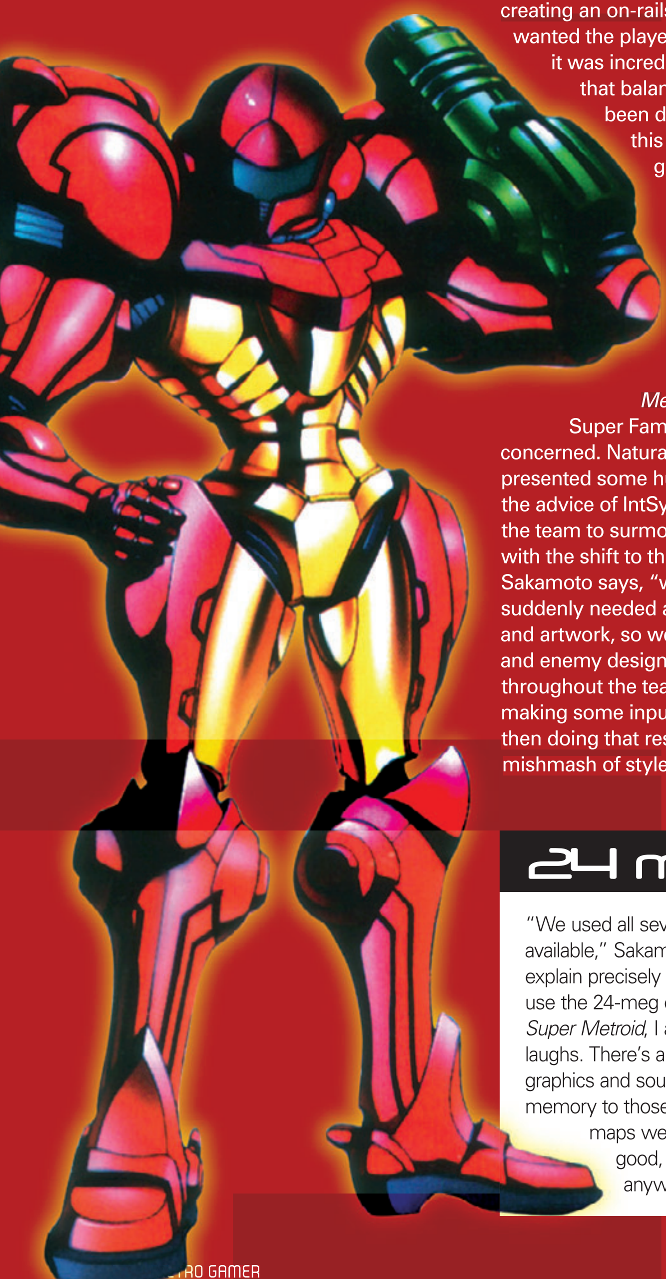
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

DONKEY KONG JR
SYSTEM: ARCADE, FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM/NES, ETC
YEAR: 1982

KID ICARUS (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: FDS/NES, GBA
YEAR: 1986

METROID
SYSTEM: FDS/NES, GBA
YEAR: 1986





way through the game – and that's how we wanted it to be. When they discovered something new – a new item or new location – we wanted the player to feel that he/she had made that discovery independently, without help from the game."

R&D1 went to great pains to achieve the fine balance seen in *Super Metroid*'s item locations, puzzles, boss encounters, and in Samus's acquired abilities and inventory use. It wasn't simply the case that everything fell into position at the first attempt at design either, as Sakamoto reveals: "In a stage following on from an area where the player made lots of discoveries, we'd hold back from pushing the player too far in order to avoid repetition. Balance between difficulty level and player discoveries was crucial. We wanted to avoid creating an on-rails experience – we wanted the player to feel free. But it was incredibly difficult to get that balancing act right. We'd been designing levels in this way since the first game, so we had a lot of experience but we still needed to experiment and build and rebuild."

As well as being a *Metroid* debut for most of the team, *Super Metroid* marked the Super Famicom debut for all concerned. Naturally, this step up presented some hurdles that even the advice of IntSys couldn't equip the team to surmount. "One problem with the shift to the Super Famicom," Sakamoto says, "was that it meant we suddenly needed a lot more sprites and artwork, so we shared the map and enemy design responsibilities throughout the team, with everyone making some input in those areas. But then doing that resulted in a complete mishmash of styles because of each designer's individual preference, so in the end I had to ask Yamane to retouch everything that had been submitted, bringing it all together as one consistent design."

Remarkably, there was no friction within the team even during the frenzied last stage of development, although there was something of a bad smell: "During the final six months of development I didn't know where I lived any more; the Nintendo building – not here, but the old place [in Higashiyama] – became like a boarding house for the *Super Metroid* team," Sakamoto grins. "It got to the stage where I really don't remember going home at all! There was a nap room where it was okay to sleep, but sometimes it was full [of sleeping, overworked *Super Metroid* staff] – those were the worst times, when I wanted to sleep but couldn't, and I didn't have time to go home! There were always between ten and fifteen of us in the office through the night, so we had to take naps in turns. The nap room wasn't being cleaned or looked after at all, because we were always using it; one morning staff from another area came to wake us up and told us that the room smelled like a zoo. Another Nintendo employee put a room freshener in the nap room, but that only made the place pong even worse. Everyone in Nintendo gave us funny looks," Sakamoto laughs. "It's quite sad having only these kinds of memories!"

Our talk soon takes a turn from development room stench to the wrath of a Nintendo demigod: Gunpei Yokoi. In his early 50s at the time of *Super Metroid*'s production, Yokoi was the game's general project manager but did not exercise any hands-on control. Sakamoto remembers how his superior viewed *Super Metroid*: "Yokoi-san, who at the time was my section chief and who always had fresh ideas, was always angry when he saw us all completely absorbed and working crazy overtime on *Super Metroid*. He came in and said, 'Are you lot trying to produce a work of art or something?' [Laughs] But this was an epic and we were already way past our deadline, and it seemed we were getting progressively further from our objectives – Yokoi-san was becoming angrier with us day by day during that period. We weren't aware of it, but Kanoh was given a warning by Yokoi-san. Although he was really unhappy with us, and even though he wasn't the type to dish out praise, Yokoi-san was constantly playing *Super Metroid* once we'd finished it – he was hooked. He was playing it so much that I wondered what he was up to. [Laughs] When other developers brought their action games to Nintendo, he'd always compare them with *Super Metroid* and invariably ended up recommending the third-party developer to 'go away and play *Super Metroid*'. That's how fond he was of our game. I suppose this is a better memory than the smelly nap room anecdote," Sakamoto laughs.

> "We didn't want to explain things to the player. We wanted to let them be able to work things out for themselves"

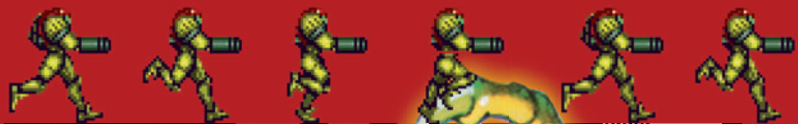
"*Super Metroid* was released in '94," he continues, "and development had taken us between two and three years. I don't know how it was perceived throughout the company, but the timing was such that all teams were focused on putting out lots of new SFC games, so there was obviously some expectation that we deliver with *Super Metroid*. We definitely had a lot of support and understanding of the game's concept from people related with the project, and that helped to ensure that we did a good job." Which, as everyone who has played the game will quickly attest, is a monumental understatement. And if it was good enough for Gunpei Yokoi, it's certainly good enough for us.

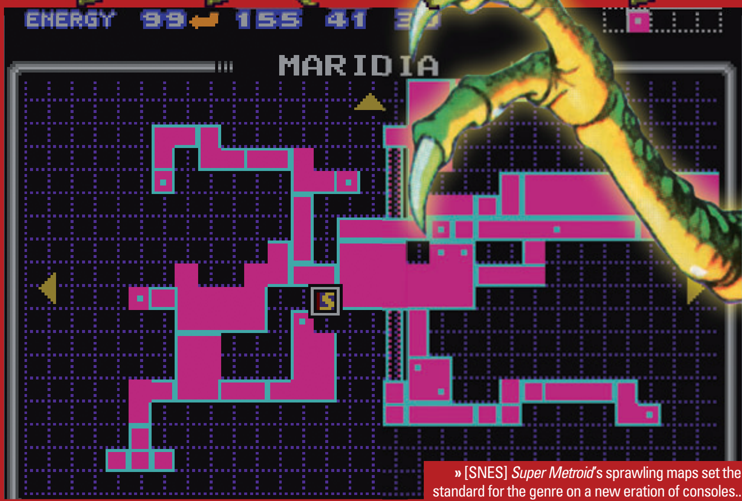
24 megabits, 7 modes

"We used all seven of the hardware modes available," Sakamoto tells me, although he doesn't explain precisely what that means. And how did you use the 24-meg cartridge that ended up housing *Super Metroid*, I ask? "I can't remember!" Sakamoto laughs. There's a pause. "We achieved wonderful graphics and sound by dedicating most of the memory to those features. Yes. Oh, and the game's maps were also quite large, I think. We made good, balanced use of the 24 megabits, anyway – that much I know for sure."





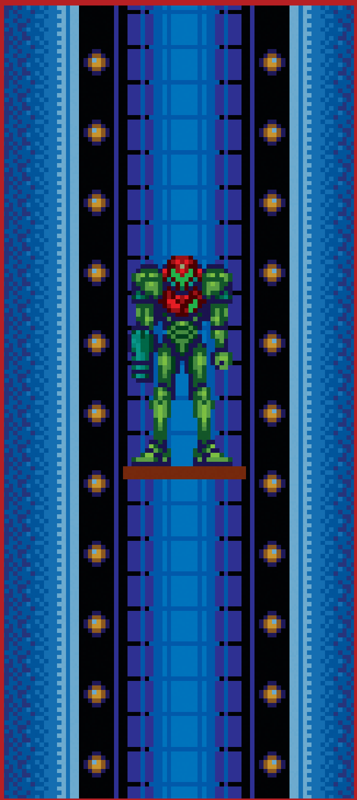




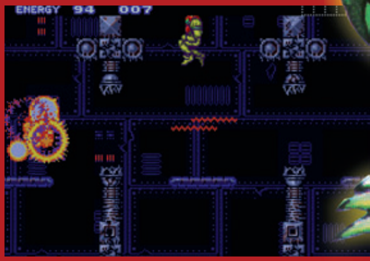
» [SNES] *Super Metroid*'s sprawling maps set the standard for the genre on a new eration of consoles..



» [SNES] The last-minute escape from the self-destructing space station has become a familiar opening for *Metroid* games.



» [SNES] The way in which new abilities open up new areas has been often copied since *Super Metroid*'s release.





The big bosses

Kraid
This first major boss character is literally a monster: he probably missed out on a role in the Chewits adverts purely because he was overqualified. Kraid's weak point is his gob, although he uses his whole being to launch quasi-organic thorns and fireballs in Samus' direction.

Phantoon
A good example of the Super Famicom hardware's transparency effects, Phantoon at times appears to be an apparition; this boss's trick is to flit between protected translucency and a devastatingly powerful solid state, and he likes to launch endless rounds of flaming blue orbs.

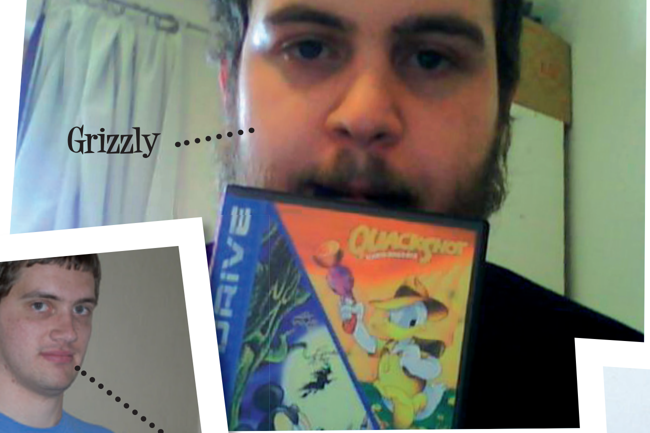
Draygon
This yellow-bellied, oversized crustacean is more than just a simple typo. Draygon is a mean swimmer, and its weak points are protected by the shell of a giant lobster. Slightly perversely, *Super Metroid* encourages you to vanquish Draygon by electrocuting it until its flesh turns purple.

Ridley
An homage – in name alone, obviously – to *Alien* director Ridley Scott, whose film was a major inspiration to the series, this senior Space Pirate appears once at the start of *Super Metroid* and again, in more powerful – yet paradoxically more vulnerable – form, towards the end of the game.

Mother Brain
The enigmatic final boss of *Super Metroid* is essentially a lump of deskulled brain. However, Mother Brain protects itself with dynamic weapons and the glass casing of a robo-suit, and when that fails, it connects to the neck of a bio-mechanical bodysuit. Afterwards, Samus again has to run for her life.

Every month we'll be looking at a classic game and discussing with you, the reader, what makes it so special. This month we take a look at Sega of America's **Castle Of Illusion** – easily one of the greatest Disney licences to ever grace a console















let's all play: Castle Of Illusion



Information

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega of America
First Released: 1990
Featured System: Mega Drive

Those First Impressions

Darran The Sega Mega Drive was the first import console I ever owned, and *Castle Of Illusion* was the game that came free with it, along with *Golden Axe*, *Revenge Of Shinobi* and *Strider*. Despite my love of *Strider*, it was *Castle Of Illusion* that was booted up as soon as I managed to get the console home, and it didn't disappoint.

Even today, *Castle Of Illusion* has a grace and beauty that even the most high profile current Disney licences can't seem to match, and it remains a truly mesmerising piece of work. Insanely cute and featuring meticulous animation that brings Mickey and his antagonists to life, it's a living, breathing platformer that sucks you in to its beautifully crafted world. Sure, Mickey is slightly sluggish, but in my mind that just enables you to drink in all that sumptuous detail.

Sirclive1 I first sent off for *Castle Of Illusion* through a magazine swap service (I think it was with *Sega Power*). When it arrived I was blown away by it. The music, the graphics… It felt as though you were actually playing through a Disney cartoon. I remember completing it within the week, mainly due to hammering away at it every day. It's a gorgeous game.

thl I remember playing the Mega Drive version around a friend's house during the early Nineties and I was so amazed by its presentation. Very colourful graphics, exhilarating gameplay, atmospheric background music and a beautifully balanced difficulty level.

WildWillyWilson I loved this back in the day and I still love it now! The jolly music is great and I adore the way Mickey swings along with his hips whenever he's standing still. Great animation, and it's just a very cheerful, upbeat game.

Nokgod This was the very first game my brother-in-law ever bought for his Mega Drive and I remember being floored by the prettiness of it. The graphics seemed so detailed and the parallax scrolling was wonderful. I have a Mega Drive myself now but still haven't got this game. I feel a trip to eBay calling…

The Best Boss



Stuart If there's one downside to *Castle Of Illusion*, it's that many of the bosses can be ridiculously easy to defeat, although in a way this just ensures you can get onto the next brilliantly crafted stage. Normally only taking 3-5 hits to defeat and possessing attack patterns that can be deciphered by a five-year-old, their only saving grace is that many of them remain so memorable. Whether you're taking on the tree boss from level 1 or defeating the weird merman-like creatures that sprang out of a stone head at the end of stage 3, their wackiness and sheer inventiveness will often cause you to raise





★ Go deeper: trivia trail

» The Master System and Game Gear releases are completely different in structure to the Mega Drive original.

» *Castle Of Illusion*'s sequel, *World Of Illusion*, saw Mickey teaming up with Donald Duck for another adventure.

» *Fantasia* was by Infogrames and not Sega of America, which probably explains why it's not a patch on *Illusion*.

» Mickey Mouse continues to crop up in videogames and was last seen in Squaresoft's excellent *Kingdom Hearts* franchise.

a smile. A special mention should also go to the fantastic tune that plays out as you're battling each mayor. Fast and frantic, it belts along at a hectic pace that simply spurs you on to defeat each boss as quickly as possible. Yes, they're insanely easy, but they do leave an impression on you, and isn't that what being a good boss is all about?

Rinoa My favourite boss is the dragon serpent thing that appears at the end of the cake level. Its face kind of reminds me of *Pete's Dragon*, which was another Disney film.

I liked Mizrabel too, probably because she was a bit trickier than the rest of the bosses.

TwoHeadedBoy **Right, I've just finished it again, and I'm settled: I love the Totem Pole Frog Warriors! Especially the look on their stupid little faces when they run into the pole. Marvellous!**

Zombi I was really struggling with the clown boss at the end of level 2, because Mickey wouldn't run fast enough to get away from his jumps. Then I realised you could simply stand in a safe spot.

Darran **Well I've just beaten the first tree boss and while I love the way he rolls up the tree to knock nuts down, he's actually pretty easy to beat. How amazing is the boss music, though? It's fast and frantic and really gets your blood pumping.**

Brut08 I've been playing the Sega Master System version and I think the dragon boss is my favourite.

Team Alfie **The guy with the bowl haircut. Any game that allowed you to beat up someone with a bowl cut in the early Nineties was always a winner in my book. If it were remade today, I would want that boss's hair restyled to a Hoxton Fin.**

The Standout Moment

Darran There's a lot to love about *Castle Of Illusion*, but if we were to put our finger on a single moment, it would have to be *Illusion*'s captivating opening scene. Starting off with the lovestruck duo of Minnie and Mickey waltzing through a forest to a soundtrack that's almost as carefree as their dance, the scene is rudely interrupted by the appearance of the evil Mizrabel, who whisks down and kidnaps poor Minnie. The sheer shock and look of dismay on poor Mickey's face is almost heartbreaking, while Mickey's determined strides towards the titular fortress just make you all the more eager to start exploring. Forget *Dragon's Lair* or *Space Ace*; it's that opening moment that makes you realise that – at the time, at least – it was the closest you've ever come to taking part in an interactive cartoon.



Rinoa **I'm cheating here, but for me there are actually two standout moments. The first is the first five minutes of the game. I'm always impressed by the colourful graphics, the music and the animation of Mickey, and just how addictive this lovely little platformer actually is! The second is where you can flip the level upside down on the second part of stage 2. I'm always wowed whenever I see it.**

WildWillyWilson For me I'd say that it's the first five minutes, as you just know you're going to enjoy this game. There's very colourful graphics and slick animation, and that chirpy and cheery music just instantly draws you in! If I had to choose a particular part, though, I'd pick the section where you end up walking into the milk bottles that would then take you to a totally new section.

Lorfarious **I'm going for its excellent music. It's a great soundtrack that really helps to create a fantastic atmosphere.**

TwoHeadedBoy I'm going to choose the part where the music goes all spooky, the sky darkens and those ghosts appear – truly an interactive cartoon in every sense.

The Best Levels

Stuart **If there's one thing we're sure everyone can agree on, it's that *Castle Of Illusion* features some wonderfully varied levels. Rich and diverse, it's been put together with so much style and panache that you're literally willing yourself to complete the current stage so that you can see what Sega would throw at you next. Yes, it starts off relatively blandly in an enchanted forest, but before long you're floating along on tiny leaves, swimming through piranha-infested waters, and exploring a giant's house and taking the occasional dip in cups of tea. Granted, many levels are simply based on the sort of generic fare that's been in platformers for years, but the gorgeous graphics, smart level design and many secrets to discover mean you'll be revisiting it for years. And wait until you discover Cake World.**



Havantgottaclue The second level is full of nice little touches, such as in the first sub-level, when you get to the top and find the key for the exit. No sooner do you think, 'Now I have to traipse all the way back down to the bottom where the exit is,' do all the platforms turn into slopes and you get to slide all the way down, easy as you like, collecting diamonds along the way.

Forum Poll

This month: Best Disney Game

Game	Votes
Castle Of Illusion	69%
World Of Illusion	11%
Quackshot	12%
Mickey Mouse	0%
Mickey's Magical Quest	8%
Fantasia	0%
Mickey's Magical Quest 3	0%

let's all play:



Castle Of Illusion

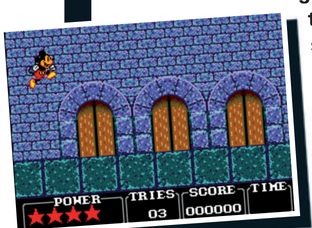
Team Alfie The first castle stage when it turns into *Castlevania* and you collect some candles at the beginning to burn bats alive, before heading down into the dungeon.

MC1 It would have to be the clock level for me. I just thought it looked absolutely lovely and it was better than any *Mickey Mouse* cartoon.

dwitefry Definitely the spider web level. Not to butter up Darran, of course, but just because it's the one level my warped brain always associates with the game. Occasionally this level pops up in my dreams! And it must have been pretty good: Sega brought it back for *World Of Illusion*.

sebadude It has to be the cake level for me. It's inventive, fun to play and looks amazing, and it's all the more of a surprise straight after the already impressive-looking library level. Made me hungry for chocolate too!

Grizzly I loved the whole section where you're being chased down the slope by a giant apple in the forest level. I also adore the level where it's dusk and you had to swim down various tunnels to get to the end. I remember the music being absolutely superb here.



The Conversions

Darran Obviously not everyone would have played the Mega Drive version of *Castle Of Illusion*, so we thought it only fair to cover the two versions that appeared on both the Game Gear and Master System. What's interesting here is that rather than try to capture the original 16-bit version, Sega instead made a totally different game that shares many similarities with its bigger brother but is tailor-made to suit the less powerful system. Sega took a similar approach with its *Sonic* games, and the end result is a surprisingly solid platformer that's not only tougher than the Mega Drive original but, some would argue, is even better. Don't take our word for it, though. Here are some first-hand accounts.

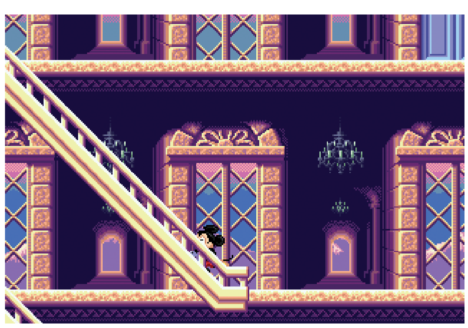
JetSetWilly I first picked this up with my Game Gear last year and it's easily the toughest of all three versions. Add in the fact that the Game Gear's screen is the size of a contact lens (metaphorically), and it's very difficult to see anything, so in the blink of an eye, you've lost all three of your lives. The Master System version is a little more forgiving, though.

ninjabearhug I've been playing the Master System version and I definitely prefer it to the Mega Drive one. The controls are much more precise and the speed of the game is much more to my liking. It makes the Mega Drive version feel like it's running in slow motion. Definitely a harder game too, but at the same time I'm finding it much easier to play as it just feels a lot more fluid.

thl I used to play the Master System conversion. The controls felt much more fluid when compared to the Mega Drive version and it played fine. It's also among the earliest platform games that I played, along with the *Alex Kidd* series, before the arrival of *Sonic*. Picked it up again for the Game Gear a few years ago and it still remains really playable.



» [Master System] This is a great conversion and has plenty of differences compared to the Mega Drive outing. It's a lot tougher, though.



Classic game? You must be joking

Just because a game's praised, it doesn't mean that everyone is going to like it…

> I can't believe that Castle was once cutting-edge
>
> paranoid marvin

> I never got on with *Castle Of Illusion*, something just didn't click with me. I don't like the way it plays, its look, the sound, any of it
>
> Ralph Milne's Left Foot

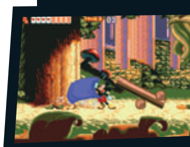
> I'm another one who does not like this game. Never have and I don't think I ever will
>
> gman72

Further play

Similar titles you may want to try

World Of Illusion

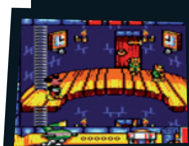
FEATURED SYSTEM: MEGA DRIVE
YEAR RELEASED: 1992



After starring in two separate adventures, Mickey and Donald finally joined forces for this fun Mega Drive romp. What sets *World Of Illusion* apart from its peers is the solid multiplayer that sees the two friends constantly helping each other out in order to traverse each gorgeous-looking stage.

Mickey Mouse

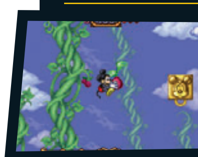
FEATURED SYSTEM: AMSTRAD CPC
YEAR RELEASED: 1988



The controls are a little stodgier than the later games, but if you're looking for some home computer *Mickey* love then this is the game to plump for. It's a fun, entertaining platformer that has Mickey climbing to the top of four enemy-laden towers. It looks really nice as well.

Disney's Magical Quest

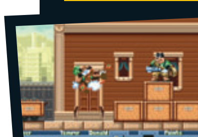
FEATURED SYSTEM: SNES
YEAR RELEASED: 1992



Capcom's take on *Mickey Mouse* is an incredibly slick little platformer for the SNES that may not boast the variety of *Castle Of Illusion* but still looks great thanks to its fantastic Mode 7 bosses, which were incredible at the time. Mickey also has the cool ability to change into new costumes that grant him handy new abilities.

Quackshot

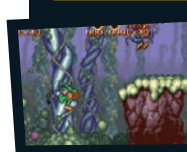
FEATURED SYSTEM: MEGA DRIVE
YEAR RELEASED: 1991



Sega's next Disney game saw Donald Duck taking centre stage in a quest for treasure. *Quackshot* is a superb platformer, with many arguing that it even bests *Castle Of Illusion*. We're not too sure on that claim, but it's nevertheless a wonderful title that oozes charm and character.

Disney's Magical Quest 3

FEATURED SYSTEM: SNES
YEAR RELEASED: 1995



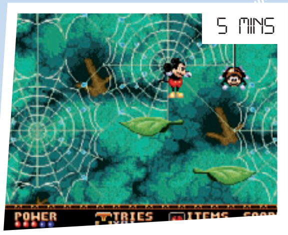
A SNES Japanese exclusive until it was released overseas on the GBA, *Magical Quest 3* is a fitting end to the series. Once again teaming up with Donald, *Magical Quest 3* boasts new costumes, greatly improved visuals and some really entertaining bosses. In fact, we prefer it to *World Of Illusion*. It's that good.

Moments in Time

The best bits from Castle Of Illusion and when they appear

1 The Spider Web Stage

You're barely into *Castle Of Illusion* when it plays one of its trump cards. With a sheer drop below him, Mickey must gingerly jump across leaves while constantly dodging the spiders that drop down to hassle him. It's a wonderful level that's further enhanced by its stunning visuals – check out the dew-laden spider webs – and gloriously serene music.





2 Downhill Run

Okay, so it's not quite as exhilarating as *Strider*'s run down the snowy, explosive-laden hill, but this shares a similar experience. After climbing to the top of the first level in Toy World you reach up and grab the exit key, only to discover the previous steps have turned into a slippery slope. It's further enhanced by the brilliant music.

3 Tea Time

One of the most memorable and surreal moments in *Castle Of Illusion* comes when Mickey jumps into a huge cup of tea. As the beverage takes on Tardis-like proportions, the plucky little mouse has to swim through the scalding brew collecting diamonds and avoiding sugar cube monsters. Weird, but oh so good.





4 Oops Upside Your Head

Toy World gets another nod thanks to its excellent second stage that sees Mickey defying clockwork soldiers and gravity itself. The scamp has to avoid low-flying toy planes, unicycling clowns and frustrating dead ends. Help is at hand, though, as certain icons will flip the screen, killing all enemies.

5 That Kiss

You'll have to play right through the game to get to one of *Illusion*'s finest moments, but it's definitely worth it. After rescuing Minnie, the now shrunken – and far cuter – Mizrabel gives the loved-up pair a ride home on her broomstick. As she flies off the lovestruck pair look shyly at each other before Minnie rushes over and gives Mickey a mighty smacker on the lips. Utterly delightful.



ShadowMan I loved the Master System version back in the day. Like the Mega Drive game, it looked great and was a joy to play. I liked the way the easy mode didn't include the whole game either, as it gave me a great incentive to go through and try it on the harder difficulty to see everything it had to offer.

Space_turnip **I'm playing the Master System version on the Game Gear through the converter. I played it years ago on the MS and Mega Drive, but this is my first proper playthrough for a while.**

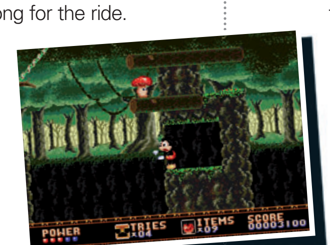
The graphics are lovely; bright and colourful and perfect for the MS/GG.

The sound is, far from being annoying, classic Master System tunes! The opening tune is superb in my opinion and evoked fond memories.

Why It's A Classic

Darran It's quite simply one of the greatest platformers to be found on any 16-bit system. Yes, you can argue that it's too easy and, granted, Mickey's bottom bounce technique takes a while to fully suss out, but in terms of the way everything is expertly pulled together nothing else on the Mega Drive comes close. Realising what a huge responsibility it had with Disney's most iconic character, Sega of America did the House of Mouse proud and created a timeless classic that has the ability to fill you with a childlike glee whenever you play through it. It's not the most original of platformers, despite being filled with all manner of cute little tricks, but it's been put together with so much style, panache and sheer enthusiasm that you can't help but get dragged along for the ride.

TwoHeadedBoy **It's a classic because it shows that Sega didn't need Capcom to make a great Disney game.**



XFile2087 It's just awesome. I bought a Mega Drive again today and picked up *Illusion* (boxed including the manual) for £5, so I'll be firing this up as soon as it turns up.

Rinoa **Fantastic music, lovely colourful graphics, a nice mix of different levels, how easy it is to pick up and play, hidden items, bizarre topsy-turvy levels and hidden areas inside tea cups, and, of course, the loveable Mickey.**

batman877 Winding on two decades later and I feel *Castle Of Illusion* has really stood the test of time. The handling and collision detection are spot-on, and the overall presentation is excellent, with wonderful graphics and music. I don't think it's too difficult to complete, particularly once you've learnt the level layout and boss patterns, but it remains a good challenge.

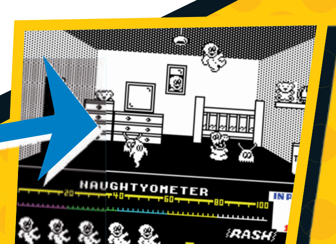
the_hawk **I reckon that pre-*Sonic* this was THE game that anyone who had a Mega Drive owned. The gorgeous graphics were like nothing I'd ever seen before and they still stand the test of time today. I guess it was the game that made anyone who didn't have a Mega Drive jealous. It was the very reason I ended up buying one and it still looks and plays well today.**

NonShinyGoose The simple reason for it being a classic is that it had to be good - before its release the Mega Drive wasn't doing too well and Sega needed a *Mario*-quality platformer to beat off the competition. They just happened to choose the most famous mouse in history to star in it.



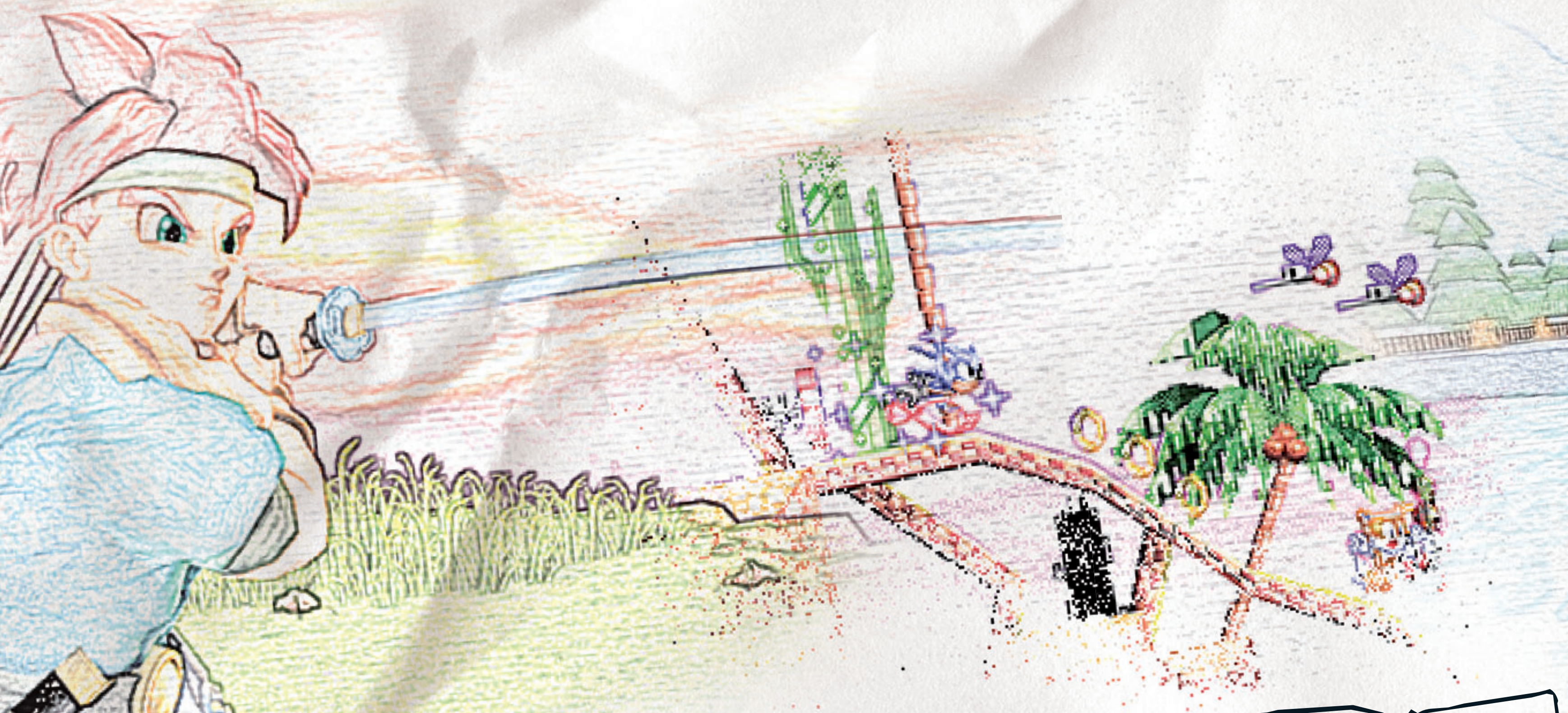
» [Mega Drive] He may be pink, but there's no denying that this is Pete's Dragon in disguise.

Next Month's Game



Jack The Nipper

Want to join in the fun? Then head on over to **www.retrogamer.net/forum** now.



FOR THE PE
BY TH

RETRO GAMER ISN'T ONE TO SHY AWAY FROM COVERING REMAKES, AND EVERY NOW AND THEN WE STUMBLE ACROSS A RATHER GOOD ONE. THE FAN GAMING SCENE GOES DEEPER THAN THE OCCASIONAL PAGE OF REVIEWS, HOWEVER, EXTENDING NOT ONLY TO REMAKES, BUT ALSO TO UNOFFICIAL SEQUELS AND EVEN REINTERPRETATIONS OF CLASSIC GAMEPLAY CONCEPTS, AS TIM HENDERSON DISCOVERS







Humans are, by nature, obsessive creatures. This is an aspect of our personalities that aptly manifests itself in a variety of ways. We obsess over love, hate, work and fashion. Tabloid newspapers survive by publishing questionable photos of celebrities for the mindless morning commuters to consume, magazines such as Empire and Little White Lies cater to specific film enthusiasts, and gaming publications tirelessly indulge the lusts of a readership that lives to see the latest advances in graphics technology, as well as those who desire a nostalgic trip through time to when this upstart industry was taking its first baby steps.

The flattery of imitation typically follows: young girls get crazy haircuts to follow Amy Winehouse's lead; a young couple wed while dressed as characters from *Star Wars*. More significantly, creative professionals typically owe a debt to those who came before: Radiohead may not have become the same band without the influence of REM, while *The Matrix* simply wouldn't exist if not for *Akira* and *Ghost In The Shell*. And just how many videogame developers decided to try their hand at making a first-person shooter after they realised how much fun *DOOM* was?

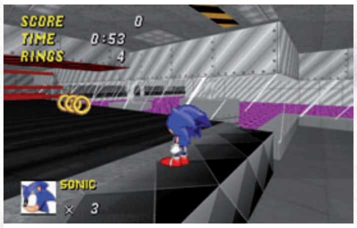
The bloated archives over at **FanFiction.net** are groaning under the weight of sloppy grammar, poorly conceived narrative direction and over twenty five thousand *Final Fantasy VII* entries. This flood of muckish content highlights one very interesting point: people feel creatively drawn to the games that captured them. They want to be an intimate part of the media-audience relationship, and they want other people to be able to understand their love. And while much of this amateur output is utter garbage, occasionally an unknown fan shows real talent and drops a finely cut diamond into the rough of the database.

This situation is mirrored somewhat by those who undertake the notably more ambitious calling of allowing their collective love for a videogame to manifest itself through the arduous task of actual game development. Cyberspace is littered with unofficial *Tetris* releases, half-baked *Mario* adventures and *Sonic* games that figure they can't possibly be any worse than Sonic Team's own output. Many are flimsy school projects, and a noteworthy proportion of the more ambitious projects have either been cancelled or put on indefinite hold.

The primary cause may be a lack of perspective. Dan Lemcke is the producer of a rather unique project: the fan-led restoration of Sega's aborted Saturn hopeful *Sonic X-Treme*, known as *Project-S*. From the perspective of picking up the pieces of a project that should have been released in its original form over ten years ago now, he is all-too-familiar with the cautionary and



» [PC] *Mario Kart* using the Source engine? Surely not? Well it's coming and it sure looks nice.



» [PC] The *Sonic Robo Blast 2* demo has an old-school vibe that does a great job of capturing *Sonic* gameplay in 3D.

5 GAMES WORTH PLAYING

Here are five games definitely worthy of your time



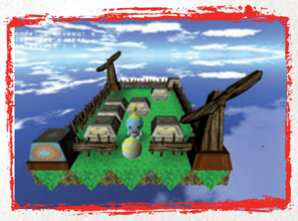
Halo Zero

Modest in scope, competently executed and free from any nasty excess fats, *Halo Zero* may well be the perfect fan game. While the finished product can be completed in just a single afternoon, this is itself a sign that the game never got ahead of itself. It's a simple, enjoyable romp that takes its cast, themes and weapons from the *Halo* universe, and then re-casts them in a side-scrolling shooter. A smartly developed videogame that actually saw completion.

Avalanche

We played a couple of dire *Final Fantasy VII* fan games before finally stumbling across *Avalanche*. A simple dungeon crawler at its heart, *Avalanche* may require a little grinding but it also presents a pleasing three-dimensional world representative of what the *Final Fantasy VII* universe could look like today – had Square Enix not become so fixated with all things emo. This is a truly entertaining action game that also doubles as a joyful trip down memory lane.





Chao's Maze

If you could summon a penny for every fan-made *Sonic* game on the net, you'd probably save up enough to buy a copy of this magazine. *Chao's Maze*, however, is different. Developed as an aside to the much more ambitious *Sonic GL*, *Chao's Maze* takes a simple obstacle course and block-nudging gameplay and saturates it in baby-blue cute. The end result is a *Sonic* fan game that fits in with the milieu but is content to provide an entertaining diversion, rather than trying to reinvent the wheel.

Broken Sword 2.5

The first thing fans will notice is just how much this feels like a *Broken Sword* game. This is no happy accident, as Ledas explains: "We analysed the original backgrounds to get a handle on the style, and remade some of the locations. We also used the original sprites as a reference and redrew them." The hard work paid off, and even the soundtrack sounds authentic. The story and puzzle design are sadly of a lesser quality than the other aspects of this game. Still worth a download.





Legend Of Princess

Anyone badly burned by *Zelda II: The Adventure Of Link* in 1987 will be thrilled by this little gem by indie darling Joakim Sandberg. Ostensibly a side scroller, *Legend Of Princess* feels just like a *Zelda* game, except juiced up on hyperkinetic colour spectrums. Like *Halo Zero*, it does well by keeping its scope realistic, and can be completed in a single session. The action is fast and frantic, the puzzles cleverly integrated, and the boss confrontations imaginative and enjoyable.

realistic scope that is required. "The biggest reason that many projects end up scrapped is an over-ambitious start," he explains. "You can't look too far ahead because then you start to overlook things."

It doesn't take much research to find evidence in support of this statement. Exploring Google brings up a graveyard of projects that were left to decay as soon as the full scale of responsibility dawned upon many hopeful entrepreneurs: promised three-dimensional remakes of *Super Metroid*, attempts to re-create *Wind Waker* on PC and the wilting libido that once fuelled numerous attempts to invigorate *Deus Ex* with more modern technology – each and every one decomposing below layers of virtual turf.

There are, not surprisingly, numerous in-progress projects that are attempting to provide the 3D *Sonic* game the fans have been asking for ever since *Sonic Adventure*. Of particular note is *Sonic Robo Blast 2* (a polished demo that does a respectable job of simulating *Sonic*'s gameplay on the Doom Legacy engine), a somewhat more modern in-progress mod for *Unreal Tournament 2004* by way of *Ashura: Dark Reign*, and of course *Project-S*: the *Sonic X-Treme* restoration project.

All of these undertakings have survived longer than most, and Lemcke is open about the advantages his project enjoys. "We're working with a man who was actually there," he exclaims. "Working with Chris Senn [designer on the original *Sonic X-Treme*] is like sitting under the learning tree." Such an advantage is integral to the project's continued existence, and is a rather unique one in this specific instance – not every fan game can be so fortunate as to have original staff on board. But Lemcke also cites more common benefits that stem from working on an established brand: "There's the advantage of having a guideline to work from, an installed fan base and lots of people who are ready to join the team and work hard."

This existing fan base may go some way towards explaining why so many fan games are attempted. Not only has an audience already been established, but it also allows for a growing team to be forged together under the banner of a common obsession.

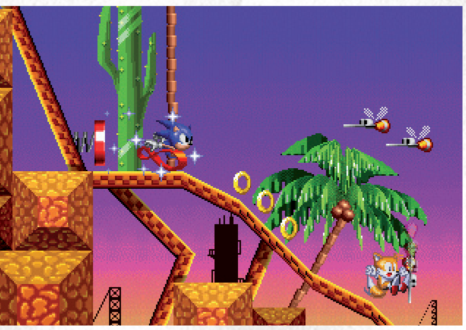
» *Avalanche*: If a new *Final Fantasy VII* was released today, chances are it might look a little like this.

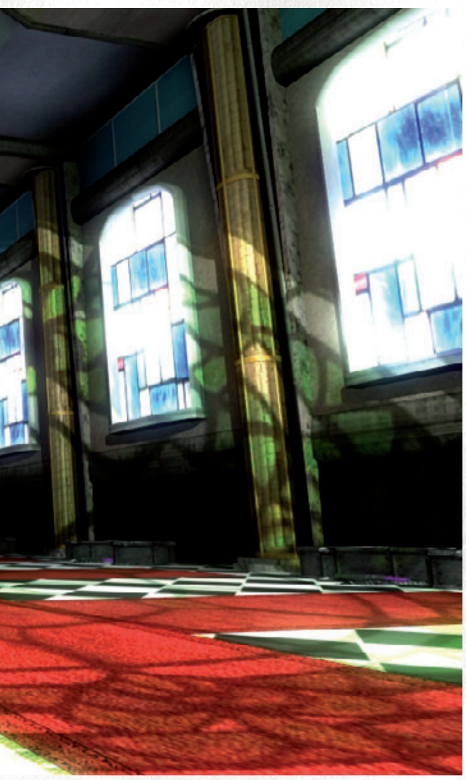


FANS FORGET THAT OUR GAME WAS MADE FOR FREE BY PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPERS



» The original locations maintain the flavour of *Broken Sword.*


» *Sonic Forever* is coming along nicely and stands a good chance of actually seeing final completion.



WORKING IN THE SHADOWS

However, as Sod's law would have it, there is a palpable downside to all of this. As your creation inevitably becomes increasingly professional, fans will no doubt begin to expect more from it. Lemcke himself lists fan expectations as the biggest disadvantage of picking up the pieces of an official part of Sonic the Hedgehog history, tepidly noting: "none of us want the fans to feel cheated."

For the moment, at least, he retains the small comfort of working on a project that is as yet unreleased. Šarunas Ledas has no such luxury. Having spent the best part of a decade working as artist and animator on the recently completed *Broken Sword 2.5: The Return Of The Templars,* he's spent the following months trawling through an avalanche of mixed reception. Although his artwork garnered mostly positive feedback, he has still been affected by many complaints levelled at the game's storyline.

"I think that some of the fans seem to forget that our game was made for free by a group of people who are not professional developers," he maintains, calling for a more realistic perspective from the Zero Punctuation generation. "Furthermore, people have become increasingly critical in recent years, and they will take for granted what's good about a piece of work and focus more heavily on the flaws." His comments hold weight. It's often easy to allow the dazzle of the polish to draw attention away from the fact that every hour of work was given charitably.

But that's not to say that the *Broken Sword 2.5* team were internally unaware of their narrative and puzzle design flailing below the standards that the rest of their production had managed to reach – a standard that many might consider equal to the official productions.

"It wasn't supposed to be a big project at first and I assume that no one expected it to last for so long," explains Ledas. "Moreover, there were no professional developers in the newborn team. However, when the team began writing a story and went public by creating a website, more and more people wanted to contribute. Once the main story was clear-cut and set in stone, work on programming, graphics and sound began." Fast-forward several years and everyone had become more experienced, and the importance of that initial planning phase reared its intimidating head: "It was too late to rewrite the script by the time the team – including our writer – had gained sufficient experience, because a large portion of the graphics and audio had already been completed."

Not going back and reworking things from scratch has to be taken in good grace. After all, the impact of working on a game as a hobby is going to affect each team member's life quite significantly. "There were numerous contributors who joined and then left," informs Ledas. "What's more, since we all had to work during our free time, it wasn't always easy to find motivation. There were times when the development was really slow for several months, and during one of those periods, putting the freeze on development was seriously considered. It took a lot of effort and most of us sacrificed much or our leisure time, but we all have our own priorities. Fortunately, developing *Broken Sword 2.5* became a hobby for many."


» [PC] The world map from the cancelled *Chrono Trigger Resurrection* looks like an agreeable peer to *Grandia II.*

ADVANTAGE: DISADVANTAGE

The *Broken Sword 2.5* team have at least been spared any legal trouble. "Revolution Software owns all the rights to the *Broken Sword* franchise," notes Ledas, "so we only needed their approval. They were happy to give us permission to make our game so long as we didn't do so for profit." This is a luxury that not all tribute games have been afforded. Some have had to meet specific compromise due to heavy corporate behest. Others have been shut down completely.

The most famous case may well be the N64-cum-PC project *Chrono Trigger Resurrection.* Eventually settling on an aim of re-creating several Chrono Trigger scenes for contemporary PC and console technology, the snippets of assets and footage posted on the game's website promised a final product of rare quality. Hours of work were poured into the code, art assets and soundtrack. Fan enthusiasm reached fever pitch. Then, mere months before the projected 2004 launch date, Square Enix issued an order to cease and desist.

Although a harsh move that outraged many fans and ignited a series of unsuccessful petitions, Square was within its legal rights. Many fan games are developed under the assumption that fair use laws will protect them, but this has always been a hazy area, and the final line can often come down to who owns the intellectual property and can afford the legal fees.

Whether such an action was actually in the company's best interest or not is perhaps more debatable. Over the years, Vivendi has gradually loosened its grip on fan-made remakes of classic Sierra adventures. Whatever case it may have originally made, certain facts emerged to indicate that such activity was far from harmful: sales figures for the month of August 2001 saw the sales of the last official *King's Quest* game, *Mask Of Eternity,* spike dramatically. This was in direct coalition with the freeware release of the fan-made *King's Quest VGA.*


» [PC] All the assets in *Broken Sword 2.5* have been created from scratch. They're also remarkably faithful to the original.

FOR THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE



» [PC] Link may have pink hair, but *Legend Of Princess* is a seriously awesome – if short – slick of side-scrolling action.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAN LEMCKE



We sat down for a one-to-one with Dan Lemcke, the producer on Project-S, to find out more about what goes through a homebrewer's mind

Retro Gamer: What was the original inspiration and drive behind starting up development on Project-S?

Dan Lemcke: *Project-S* was originally spawned from a desire to make a *Sonic X-Treme* fan game. The 'Sonic X-Treme Compendium' [website] and the work shared within it is what spurred us on.

RG: Project-S started its life as a project to complete the work that Sega had left unfinished on Sonic X-Treme. Is this still the goal, or has the project spread its wings elsewhere?

DL: *Project-S* has changed, yes. We've chosen to make a full 3D game with new levels, as opposed to simply continuing *X-Treme*, although we do still draw inspiration from *X-Treme*. We've chosen to have our game take place between *Sonic & Knuckles* and *Sonic Adventure*.

RG: What advantages/issues come with picking up the pieces of a once official, unfinished title? What has demand for release been like?

DL: The advantages include having a guideline to work from, an installed fan base of anyone who's followed *Xtreme*'s history, and lots of people ready to join the team and work hard. The opinions from the fans help as well. It's beneficial being able to give their opinions first-hand attention.

There are fewer disadvantages. The biggest of which, I'd say, is that our team has a lot to live up to. The legacy of *X-Treme* is what helped us begin, but living up to such a history isn't easy.

RG: Legally, where does Sega stand?

DL: I can't say for certain that Sega has noticed us yet. If they have, they haven't raised any objections.

RG: How have the team been finding the challenge of constructing a Sonic game in three dimensions?

DL: Being a young team made up of different people with varying skills, natural talent levels, experience, ideas, geographical locations, and availability time-wise, difficulty was to be expected. The team has responded to each challenge with a greater amount of resolve and vigour. Our design is constantly evolving and changing into something better. With the talent behind the design, I have faith that we'll have a winner on our hands.

RG: Finally, can you tell us whether or not there is a projected release date?

DL: Unfortunately, there is nothing solid yet, but we are absolutely determined to put forth a quality product. After all, you only get one shot at making a good first impression on your audience.



» The very first glimpse of gameplay from *Project-S*. It's obviously undergone some changes since its Saturn beginnings.





» [PC] A piece of art that inspired the in-progress remake of *Sonic 2*. We can only hope the final product looks this good.



» [PC] Outdoor areas in *Half-Life* suffered from hardware limitations. The new technology has worked wonders.

Although Vivendi has at least loosened a once watertight attitude, a more complicated example of copyright confusion arose late last year, in the form of the moderating controversy that surrounded *LittleBigPlanet*. Sony's sudden culling of a noticeable chunk of fan-made levels within its platformer sparked a chain reaction of internet outrage and spoiled the fragile goodwill that had previously surrounded the game. When a selection of different levels were deleted for a variety of unexplained reasons, the community was left to contemplate just what the company had expected to happen when it released a game with the tagline 'Play, Create, Share' as its foremost Christmas release. There was never any doubt that *Mario* tributes were going to appear – tributes that were made with the very tools that Sony and Media Molecule had provided. The fact that the company had clothed Sackboy as characters from *Final Fantasy VII* and *Metal Gear Solid* didn't help. Through a desire to cross-promote its own exclusives, it had actively encouraged such activity from its fan base.

MODIFIED PERSPECTIVE

LittleBigPlanet was hardly the first to bring a cross-format tribute to Sony's console. Almost every PlayStation magazine on the planet carried with it a screenshot of Master Chief proudly rendered in *Unreal Tournament III*. The imminent 360 release of the game may have influenced Microsoft's decision to let the impressive character model live on, but the modding scene goes deeper still in PC land and can be hugely beneficial to any corporation that chooses to embrace and nurture it.

Although many mods do little more than re-skin or add a few new maps to an already existing game, more ambitious projects can alter the game from which they are born so heavily that it would be fair to compare them to original games built with a middleware graphics engine. After all, this is how such multiplayer classics as *Counter-Strike* came to be.

Back when *Half-Life 2* was released, there were questions over whether or not Valve would go back and properly rebuild the original *Half-Life* with the newer, more powerful technology. The response to this seemed simple: if the fans wanted such a game, they would do it themselves. Such an attitude does a lot to summarise why the company has enjoyed such notable ongoing success: through fostering its community and actively encouraging its users to experiment, it has at once created a sense of safe loyalty, as well as a pool for emerging talent.

It was right, too. The fans would make it themselves, and if the recently released trailer is any indication, then the *Black Mesa* project is an example of the modding scene at its absolute jaw-dropping finest. More than simply a classic game with a few new effects and crisper textures, the entire experience has been built from the ground up to such a standard that it's quickly earned itself recognition for being as good as a legitimate remake.

Not so, however, according to the project's level design lead, Daniel Junket.

5 GAMES WORTH WATCHING

The five titles to keep a close eye on



Project-S

This *Sonic* game has been in development since a time when *Sonic* games were good, but it's more than an exercise in finishing *X-Treme*, says Lemcke: "We've chosen to make a full 3D game with new levels, drawing inspiration from *X-Treme*, rather than simply picking up the pieces." It'll be interesting to see if they succeed. "Sonic Team catches a lot of flak," Lemcke admits. "I don't believe that all of it is deserved. Capturing the speed and simplicity that defined the 2D gameplay isn't easy."

Black Mesa

This updated *Half-Life* isn't just an impressive mod, *Black Mesa* is also one of the most impressive games. Junket highlights why it could even surpass the incredible original. "The introduction to the tentacle in Blast Pit was one of the most memorable moments in *Half-Life*. Our artists have been using new techniques for cinematic-quality physically simulated destruction. The tentacle now sends debris flying, bends girders and shears railings as he thrashes about the control room."





Legend Of Zelda – Project: Light

Twilight Princess's warm reception has decayed to feelings of apathy. With *Ocarina*'s legacy refusing to budge, and without the visual charisma of *Wind Waker*, the once-exciting prospect of a more grown-up *Zelda* game needs rejuvenation. Among the countless *Zelda* fan games, both released and still in development, *Project: Light* is the most ambitious. We expect the team here may have bitten off too much, but progress should be interesting to observe.

The Silver Lining

A rare example of developer appeal overturning a cease-and-desist order. The words 'King's Quest' may no longer feature in the title, but the continued existence of this game is a feat worthy of note. *King's Quest* fans are already embracing *The Silver Lining*'s promise to provide closure for the series – a hefty responsibility. Or at least it would be, had the scale of the project not been cut from nine chapters to two. This one will hopefully be ready and approved for us to play before the year is out.





Mario Kart Source

Another in a line of total conversion mods, the team here have so far done a decent job of getting Valve's technology to cater for the cheery colours and rounded architecture that a *Mario Kart* game demands. While it looks the part, the videos that have been released so far leave us feeling a little cold towards the control of both the karts and the camera: it's looking a little slippery.

A HEALTHY MOD SCENE PROMOTES THE GROWTH OF THE PLAYER BASE

» Cross-franchise promotion of *LittleBigPlanet* as witnessed at TGS. How Sony ever expected fans not to do the same will forever remain a mystery.



Although he isn't so irrationally modest as to wholly deny the scope of his team's work, he remains quick to point out that "even though *Black Mesa* really stresses the 'total' in 'total conversion mod', it's still a mod. It's just bigger and more ambitious than most."

In the simplest sense, a total conversion mod is a game modification that replaces almost everything, from assets to core gameplay elements, and sometimes even genre. While *Black Mesa* doesn't go so far as to stray from its FPS gameplay template, its ambition excels in all other areas. This is *Half-Life 1* made from the ground up with *Half-Life 2*'s technology. "Early last year, we made a concerted effort to completely remake or replace all of the *Counter-Strike: Source* assets we were using," Junket explains, "and as a side effect of that we'd made enough content to switch out most of the stuff we were using from *Half-Life 2*."

This has thus far culminated in a trailer that has had both devoted fans of the franchise and curious onlookers frothing at the mouth. Daniel has noticed that the interest hasn't ended there, either, and enthuses that "from what we've heard, Valve are just as excited to see the end result as everyone else." He takes a moment to regain his composure before pointing out the benefit of Valve's stance on the mod scene. "We're lucky that they've been so good about it – I guess it's partly out of curiosity to see how we'll expand on their ideas and partly because they figured it was inevitable," he notes, before going on to point out that "a healthy mod scene also helps promote the growth of the player base by extending replayability of the game, which results in a larger number of sales, so everybody wins."

Modding certainly helps expand player investment, and it's easy to believe that it will have a beneficial effect on sales in the long term. *King's Quest VGA* saw Sierra's official product receive a noticeable sales bump, and with *Black Mesa* promised as a free download to anyone with a Source game installed on their Steam account, it's entirely possible



» [PC] Fan games such as *Super Mario DX Blue Twilight* are available free of charge.

that a few reluctant players may just view purchasing *Portal* as a worthwhile price of admission.

And if that somehow seems too expensive, there's still a ton of content – *Super Mario DX Blue Twilight*, *Quest For Glory II VGA*, *Ultimate Flash Sonic* – that can still be experienced for free. Fan games will continue to come as surely as the sunsets, and we'll continue to put them through our examination procedures. They deserve at least some attention because, really, there are few ways of showing your affection for your favourite game that are more dedicated than this.

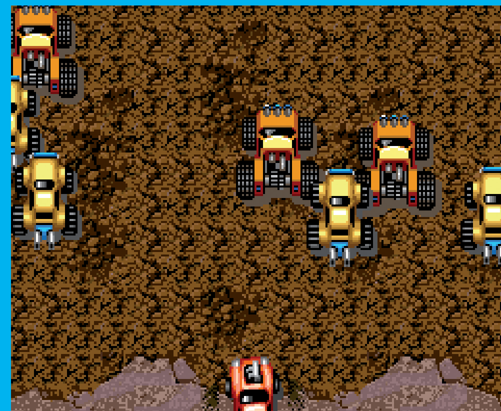
LED STORM



[Arcade] Bashing other cars off the road earns you points.



[Arcade] The contenders line up on the starting grid.



[Arcade] Let's off road!



[Arcade] Select your vehicle wisely.

CAPCOM'S BACK CATALOGUE IS FULL OF HIDDEN GEMS, MANY OF WHICH ARE EMINENTLY PLAYABLE TODAY. DAMIEN MCFERRAN UNCOVERS THE TOP-DOWN CLASSIC THAT HAS GONE UNLOVED FOR TOO LONG



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
» **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
» **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
» **GENRE:** RACING
» **RELEASED:** 1988
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £25+

When Capcom recently announced its most profitable franchises of all time, the list hardly came as a massive shock. All the usual suspects were present and correct, including such illustrious names as *Resident Evil, Street Fighter, Mega Man* and *Devil May Cry*. One title predictably absent was *LED Storm*, a little-known top-down racer produced by Capcom in the late-Eighties. This lack of commercial recognition is unfortunate because this quirky little title comes from an era when Capcom was famed for wild experimentation as opposed to cashing in on tried-and-tested franchises with a slew of sequels. Despite facing critical indifference at the time of its release, *LED Storm* is actually rather good.

The premise behind the game's four-wheeled mayhem is typical of the era: wafer-thin and totally inconsequential. The epic 'World Race 24' is about to take place and your character – billed in the attract sequence as 'hero FRED' – finds himself quietly mulling over his participation in said event. "What type of cars is most easy driving for me?" he thinks to himself in the game's intro, presumably in a Japanese-English accent. The allure of the $1,000,000 prize booty is obviously enough to swing it, and FRED hops into his racing gear and prepares to hit the asphalt. Game on.

Although *LED Storm* bears a striking resemblance to fellow top-down speed-fests such as *Spy Hunter* and *Rally-X*, it's actually rather unique. There's a particular focus on vehicular combat, but rather than shoot your rival racers off the road using all manner of heavy weaponry, you have to either ram them into barriers or jump on top of them – the latter option being a gameplay mechanic that was undoubtedly inspired by the 1982 Data East title *Bump 'N' Jump*.

Before you even turn a wheel in anger you're given the choice of three mechanical steeds. The first is an F1 racing car, which is predictably nippy but a little wimpy when it comes to withstanding attacks from rivals. The 'Convoy' truck lacks pace but is built like the proverbial brick outhouse. The slinky Porsche clone, meanwhile, is somewhere in the middle, and therefore presents the best choice for beginners.

Initially, *LED Storm* comes across as almost sadistically difficult. When

WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE



DEATH FROM ABOVE
There's nothing more gratifying than crushing an enemy racer under your wheels. Time your jumps correctly to inflict massive damage.



SUPER HANG ON
During the race, pesky robots will cling to your car and prevent you from jumping. Swerve from side-to-side to shake them off.



ROAD HOG!
You can expect to hit the tarmac with all manner of monstrous machines, ranging from lowly motorcycles to massive trucks.



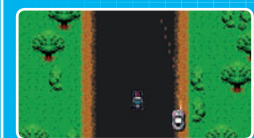
AWESOME SOUNDTRACK
The legendary Tim Follin wrote the music for the US Gold conversions. Predictably it's brilliant and worth playing the game for.

INFLUENCES

Games that influenced **LED Storm** and those that evolved from it



■ **BUMP 'N JUMP** [ARCADE] 1982
Probably the biggest single influence on *LED Storm*, this Eighties arcade racer saw the player bumping and jumping all over rival buggies.

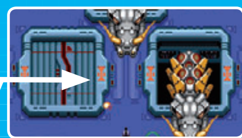


■ **SPY HUNTER** [ARCADE] 1983
Another top-down classic, this game inspired numerous clones – of which *LED Storm* was just one – throughout the Eighties.



■ **RALLY X** [ARCADE] 1980
Arguably one of the most famous top-down racers of all time, Namco's seminal 1980 title *Rally X* is still worth a look even today.





■ **LAST DUEL** [ARCADE] 1988
Released in the same year as *LED Storm*, this Capcom stable-mate shares many similarities, but plays quite differently.



■ **MICRO MACHINES** [SMD] 1993
A true top-down classic, Codemasters' *Micro Machines* franchise was based on a successful Eighties toy line.



■ **SUPER CARS** [AMIGA] 1990
Gremlin's much-loved 1990 racing/combat title saw the player slipping into the leather seat of a sports car with missiles.

"From an era when Capcom was famed for its wild experimentation"

travelling at full speed it's incredibly hard to anticipate oncoming obstacles – the track has a habit of branching off almost without warning – and fighting it out with fellow road users can be frustratingly tricky, especially when you consider there are additional hazards to contend with. The track is littered with oil slicks and gaping holes in the road, which require deft use of the 'jump' button. However, give it time and the game becomes a thoroughly challenging and enjoyable experience. Once you begin to learn the layout of the tracks, you can then focus on taking out enemies and collecting energy canisters, which are vital to your success as your gauge is constantly dropping as you play and is further depleted whenever you come unstuck.

Interestingly enough, *LED Storm* was released in Japan under the title *Mad Gear*, which hardcore Capcom fans will note is the name of the nefarious gang in *Final Fight*. Even more interesting is the fact that a modified version of the game was released under the banner *LED Storm Rally 2011*, which contains more futuristic visuals but the same core gameplay. It's this version that forms the basis of US Gold's multiple home computer conversions, all of which were released in 1989.

Developed as part of the publisher's long-running agreement with Capcom to create licensed home conversions of its coin-op titles, the game was launched under the GO! label. Considering the standard of technology available at the time, the home ports are actually quite faithful. Obviously the 16-bit versions are the most aesthetically impressive, but, ironically, the 8-bit iterations actually play better than their more powerful cousins. No console ports were forthcoming, which gives an indication of *LED Storm*'s relative lack of success in the arcades.

Unlike Capcom's other 1988 top-down combat racer *Last Duel*, which was lucky enough to be featured on *Capcom Classics Collection Vol 2*, *LED Storm* has never been re-released on any retro collection. While it's hardly a solid-gold classic, it's nevertheless a thoroughly enjoyable blast and one that recalls an era when the Japanese veteran was happy to dabble with original concepts and produce fast-paced and intensely demanding coin-op experiences.

THE CONVERSIONS

How the various formats compare



1 SPECTRUM

BEST VERSION

It might be the least visually impressive of all the assembled ports, but what the Speccy version lacks in looks it more than makes up for in terms of raw difficulty. It's a gloriously tough nut to crack, which is perfectly in keeping with the feel of the arcade version.



2 ATARI ST

While this 16-bit version obviously bares a close resemblance to its arcade parent, it has one glaring fault – it's simply too easy. While it could be argued that the coin-op original is unforgivably tough, the developers have toned down the challenge a little too much.



3 C64

On C64 the game predictably features the chunky, pixelated look that afflicted so many on the platform, but it's actually rather nippy and everything thunders along at a pleasing pace. It's also a damn sight more taxing than the 16-bit editions, which is a bonus.



4 AMIGA

The Amiga version is very much the same as its Atari ST counterpart: great graphics, lovely sound, but a severe absence of difficulty. It's a real shame because the developer has worked wonders to keep the visual tone of *LED Storm* as faithful as possible.

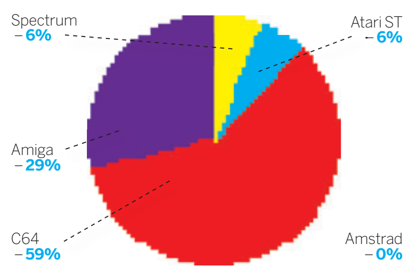


5 AMSTRAD

WORST VERSION

Out of all the 8-bit versions, this is the most disappointing. Although it manages to outshine the Speccy port in the visual stakes, the gameplay has translated less successfully and the sense of speed that makes *LED Storm* so appealing has gone AWOL.

FORUM OPINION



"C64. Uber-playable. I spent ages on this during a rare hot English summer and the fantastic music made it a winner."
– The vulture_

"Loved the C64 and Amiga versions. The Amiga version was miles better, but I preferred the trucks on the C64. They were huge!" **– Rapidmollusc**

THE MAKING OF…

WOLFENSTEIN 3D



Courting controversy at seemingly every ray-casted corner, Wolfenstein 3D harked back to the comic book style of war-torn heroics, where men were men and Nazis were three-armed biomechanical mutants. Taking careful steps through its labyrinthine corridors, Stuart Hunt hugs his revolver and ventures deep into the nightmarish world of Castle Wolfenstein. It's there he hopes to rendezvous with Corporal John Romero and blow the lid off one of videogames' most influential 3D titles.

If there's one thing this generation of gaming isn't short of, it's first-person shooters. There are currently around 40 FPSs available on the Xbox 360, and about 300 in development or being brainstormed as you read this. Now compare that to the number of platform games starring gun-wielding squirrels on water-skis that there currently are on Microsoft's big white box: a big fat zero (and that surprises you why? - ED), and you can start to see the vicelike grip that the FPS genre has over the current climate of gaming.

Wolfenstein 3D certainly has a lot to answer for, but equally it also has a great deal to be applauded for. Despite what you may have heard or read, *Wolfenstein 3D* wasn't the first example of a first-person perspective videogame. *Maze War*, *3D Monster Maze*, and even id's (still working under Softdisk at this point) very own *Hovertank 3D* and *Catacomb 3D* all came before the release of *Wolfenstein 3D*, but it was *Wolfenstein*'s cutting-edge engine, controversial setting, guns and out-and-out action that helped popularise a game genre that has been at its most prevalent in recent years. So where and how did *Wolfenstein 3D* begin? Well, as we're slowly starting to discover here at **Retro Gamer**, it's very often the case that many classic games were directly inspired by games that came before them; very often the titles that the author enjoyed playing in their youth. And in the case of *Wolfenstein*, the muse was two Apple II titles from, ironically, Muse Software, titled *Castle Wolfenstein* and *Beyond Castle Wolfenstein*, both written by Silas Warner.

> FIRST BITE OF THE APPLE SECOND

Born in 1967 in Colorado, John Romero began his videogame career writing software for the Apple II, a machine that he has always had a great deal of love for. Writing from home, John started his programming career submitting his homebrew game efforts to various Apple II magazines of the day, such as the popular *inCider*, and in 1987 he got his first real break into the industry when he was hired by Origin Systems to port across various Apple II games to the C64. To cut a potentially long story very short, after a time, John went on to co-form the companies Inside Out Software and Ideas From The Deep, where he continued to write software and applications for the Apple II. In 1989 Romero joined the company Softdisk, and it was there that he met fellow id founders Tom Hall, John Carmack and Adrian Carmack (not related) while working together on Softdisk's bi-monthly PC disk magazine, *Gamer's Edge*. It was also around about this time that Romero took a telephone call from an old work colleague that would ultimately lead to the gestation of *Wolfenstein*'s 3D visuals, as he explains:

"The original idea to do texture-mapped polygons came from Paul Neurath, who was then working on *Ultima Underworld*. I knew Paul very well since I worked with him back in 1987-88 at Origin Systems in

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** APOGEE
- » **DEVELOPER:** ID SOFTWARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **PLATFORMS:** DOS, MAC, SNES, JAGUAR, IPHONE
- » **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £3-10+

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

HOVERTANK 3D
SYSTEM: DOS
YEAR: 1991

DOOM (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1993

QUAKE
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1996

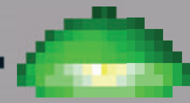




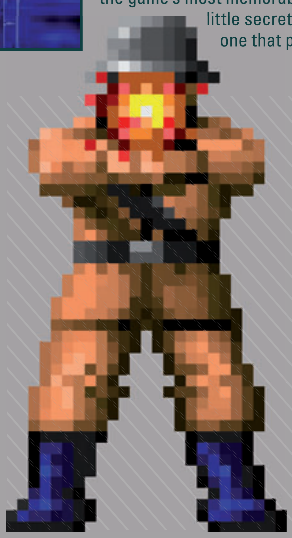
> **"I'll never forget the first time I saw Wolfenstein 3D. To me it definitely felt like the birth of a whole new genre, and I knew it was one that I desperately wanted in on"**
>
> Cliff 'CliffyB' Bleszinski, Epic Games



GHOSTS IN THE SHELL



WOLFENSTEIN 3D contains plenty of secrets and Easter eggs to discover; so many, in fact, that we could probably run a Complete History of the Secrets of *Wolfenstein 3D* in a future issue. We thought we'd ask John Romero about one of the game's most memorable little secrets; one that pays a brilliant homage to another game that John loved as a kid: "I was a huge, huge fan of *Pac-Man*," he reveals. "I used to play the game for about five screens without even looking at the arcade display, so an homage to *Pac-Man* just had to be done. The inspiration came from the *Pac-Man* machine we had at id and Bobby Prince was close to it, so it was easy for him to hear the music and replicate it in a jazzy vein." The secret level faithfully replicates the first stage maze in Namco's arcade classic but replaces the pills with gold chalices. Unfortunately, the secret *Pac-Man* area isn't easy to access without shamelessly resorting to the warp cheat. However, if you want to try to reach it off your own back – which is very commendable of you, by the way – you need to own the commercial release of the game, pop it into your PC, and Google 'how the hell do I access the *Pac-Man* secret in *Wolfenstein 3D*?', because it's just far too convoluted to fit inside this tiny little boxout.



New Hampshire, and one day on the phone he mentioned that they were using a new technique called 'texture mapping' on their walls. After the call I told John Carmack what they were doing and he looked up for a few seconds and said, 'Yeah, I can do that.' The phone call was in 1990 and we didn't really do texture mapping until an entire year later with *Catacomb 3D*."

John's next move was to form id Software with John Carmack, Adrian and Tom, but before all ties could be cut with Softdisk the boys were contractually obliged to write a number of games for their former employer. The most poignant of these titles, in relation to *Wolfenstein 3D*'s history, were *Hovertank 3D*, the first 3D PC game, and *Catacomb 3D*. Both of these games made use of the 3D graphics engine developed by John Carmack that would later be refined for *Wolfenstein 3D*. And so, after a year working out their agreement with Softdisk had ended, the shackles were finally off and the guys were free to begin working on their second title for Apogee Software, with which id had struck up a good working relationship during the whole id/Softdisk interim period. It was then that John broached the idea to do something quirky with the 3D technology that the team had used in *Hovertank* and *Catacomb 3D* and remembered back to Warner's Apple II WWII game.

Castle Wolfenstein and its sequel were top-down action stealth games with a perspective and gameplay remarkably similar in feel to the early 8-bit *Metal Gear* games. Released in 1981, and predating Kojima's popular stealth series by a good seven years, *Castle Wolfenstein* is the earliest example of a stealth/action computer game and is also where the inspiration behind *Wolfenstein 3D* can be found. In Warner's game you play a steadfast soldier who is tasked with retrieving secret plans that are hidden away inside a Nazi fort, and the player must sneak past and even impersonate enemy guards to retrieve the documents and escape the stronghold.

"The original *Castle Wolfenstein* was a seminal computer game," admits Romero. "It was breakthrough, fantastic, action-packed and frightening. The sequel, *Beyond Castle Wolfenstein*, refined some of the minor issues with the original and had an interesting goal rooted in actual historical fact: the July 20 1944 bomb attempt on Hitler's life by his own officers. The subject matter of *Castle Wolfenstein* was very non-standard back in those days of shoot-the-alien games – the

"It felt instantly refreshing, but dizziness soon kicked in. I got lost and I remember thinking, 'It'll never catch on'" Gavin Price, principal designer, Rare



» [PC] Playing *Wolfenstein 3D* won't turn you into a cold-hearted killer, but it will according to some.

» [SNES] The dogs were switched with giant rats in the SNES version. Apparently giant rats are seen as the devil's pets.



» [PC] In addition to mowing down Hitler's army, there's plenty of treasure to grab.



» [PC] Oh dear, this is it: the final battle between BJ and Hitler. Let's end it right here, right now!



reason I loved *Pac-Man*. Flash forward ten years and it was still a novel subject to base an action game upon."

And so, with this WWII theme in mind, John and the team quickly set about creating a 3D re-imagining of Warner's WWII game using the 3D technology that John Carmack had designed.

"Originally we were copying the play style of *Castle Wolfenstein* where you could search bodies and open crates, and we added body dragging so guards didn't get alerted. Then, after playing for a bit, we felt that the game was being slowed down and the true fun was in the insane 70fps speed, so we removed all barriers to speed," reveals Romero.

> NAUGHTY BY NATURE

The removal of those stealth elements from *Wolfenstein 3D* proved to be a wise move by id. The relentless action in the game was one of the key ingredients that helped it to find an almost instant appeal on its release and also helped to make those sensitive WWII themes all the more divisive. If the likes of *Wolfenstein 3D, Postal, Thrill Kill, Night Trap* and *GTA* have taught developers anything, it's that courting controversy, rightly or wrongly, is a sure-fire way to help generate interest and publicity for your game. Given the game's WWII backdrop, many of the rooms in *Wolfenstein 3D* were adorned with Nazi symbolism such as swastikas and portraits of Adolf Hitler, and the game's title music also used the theme *Horst-Wessel-Lied*, which was the official anthem of the Nazi Party. As the usage of imagery from unconstitutional organisations is a federal offence in Germany, sale and distribution, but not ownership, of *Wolfenstein 3D* was made illegal in the country, where it remains so to this day. Of course, it's only after speaking to Romero that we realise the wonderful irony that the World War II theme was only selected because of the team's love for Warner's game.

"Our interest with *Wolfenstein* had nothing to do with what the FPS genre splintered off into, namely World War II games. Our excitement was around the engine tech, new style of gameplay and what kind of cool story we could put the game into that wasn't typical. We never thought, 'We need to make a war game – hey, it would be cool to use *Castle Wolfenstein* as an IP to base a war game on.' We all worshipped at the altar of Silas Warner, so it was an obvious choice, war theme or not," Romero continues. "We were simply trying to faithfully recreate *Castle Wolfenstein*. We were just shareware developers and had no idea of where the game would go in a worldwide sense. We didn't put content in the game to intentionally provoke controversy; we put what we thought should be in there."

Wolfenstein 3D's story followed the tale of American GI William 'BJ' Blazkowicz, who is captured by the Germans and imprisoned inside *Castle Wolfenstein*. BJ was purposefully atypical of the type of all-American

CONVERSION CAPERS



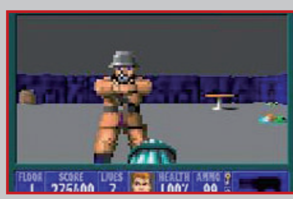
3DO
As well as featuring nice redrawn sprites, this version of *Wolfenstein 3D* has several CD music tracks that are exclusive to the 3DO. This version also allows you to play any mission in any order your heart so wishes. While not as slick as the excellent Jaguar version, the 3DO port is certainly better than its stab at *Doom*.



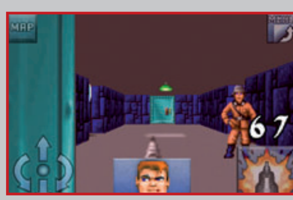
Jaguar
The Jag offers another great console version of *Wolfenstein 3D*, with dour-looking visuals, which give the game a sense of real menace, and slick gameplay – some might say too quick, in fact – thanks to a zippy frame rate. It also has gore aplenty, a few new weapons derived from *Doom*, and a save feature too.



Super Nintendo
For pretty obvious reasons, the Super Nintendo has the most cannibalised version of *Wolfenstein 3D* you can find. Here, enemy blood is replaced with grey sweat, the dogs are giant rats, and all traces of Nazi symbolism are removed – including Hitler, who is now renamed and clean-shaven.



Game Boy Advance
Bizarrely, the GBA port got released in Germany, untouched, with all the Nazi references and blood intact. This is an ambitious and enjoyable enough portable port that is sadly let down by hazy-looking visuals and not one note of music.



iPhone
Ported to Apple's machine by John Carmack, *Wolfenstein 3D Classic*, like the 3DO port, allows you to play the episodes in any order. It's also blessed with a whole host of control options. Sadly, despite Carmack making the very best of the controls, they still let this port down.

THE MAKING OF… WOLFENSTEIN 3D

MARK OF THE WOLF

We take a brief look back at other FPS games that made use of the Wolf3D engine…



Operation Body Count
Despite its wonderful title, *Operation Body Count* is oft cited as being one of the worst FPSs ever made. Coming a year after *Doom*, which certainly didn't help its cause, *OBC* might have its shortfalls but it does demonstrate a few innovative features, the most noteworthy being that you could dole out orders to computer team-mates, *Rainbow Six*-style.



Blake Stone
Taking the Wolf3D engine into *Buck Rogers* meets *007* realms, the *Blake Stone* series managed to carve quite a following. Like *Wolfenstein 3D*, the game contained six episodes but is noteworthy for actually incorporating the stealth elements that id eventually dropped in its game and pioneering several more FPS conventions that are common today.



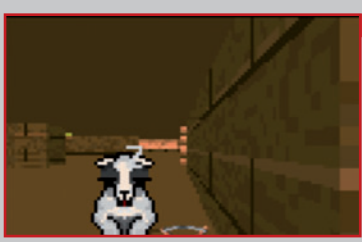
Shadowcaster
Shadowcaster is a *Wolfenstein 3D* clone with more emphasis on exploration that made use of the extra power that CD-ROMs could offer. With a central character that could morph into six creatures, each with differing powers and abilities, *Shadowcaster* is by far the most ambitious game to wield the fairly modest *Wolfenstein 3D* technology.



Corridor 7: Alien Invasion
Corridor 7 was a colourful corridor blaster that was set in space. It features some imaginative, albeit garishly pixelated, alien enemies that demonstrated an iota of intelligence and also wielded weapons that you could actually pick up and use. The game featured special visors such as infrared and night vision to aid you on your mission.



Rise Of The Triad: Dark War
While you'd be mistaken for thinking *Rise Of The Triad* made use of id's *Doom* engine – the games look amazingly similar – it actually used a refined version of the Wolf3D engine. With impressive graphics and a slaughterhouse worth of gore and weapons, this was one of the better games to follow in *Wolfenstein 3D*'s footsteps.



Super Noah's Ark 3D
Who'd have thought one of the most violent videogames ever made would later be used to recount one of the Bible's most whimsical tales of animal safety and the deaths of millions? In this bizarre game you play Noah and are tasked with putting to sleep hordes of mad animals using a slingshot and several rounds of invisible paracetamol.

» [PC] *Wolfenstein 3D* has its fair share of blood and guts, as this screenshot quite aptly demonstrates.



GIs that were seen in other action games of the time. BJ was American but of Polish descent and was also the grandfather of id's Commander Keen (aka Billy Blaze), tying the two id games together quite nicely. Like Warner's game, at first glance, BJ's mission seemed simply to escape capture. However, after the first chapter of *Wolfenstein 3D* comes to a close, the game's narrative takes a wonderful turn for the bizarre. Once BJ escapes Castle Wolfenstein he discovers that Hitler has been creating a horde of undead mutants inside another of his strongholds, and the game's second chapter finds BJ infiltrating the facility in order to take out the scientist responsible for creating these abominations. The third and final chapter of *Wolfenstein 3D*, titled 'Die, Führer, Die', finds BJ infiltrating Hitler's underground lair, which has been built underneath the Reichstag building, and it's here that BJ memorably comes face to face with the German dictator himself, who is armed with two Gatling guns and wearing a protective robotic armour.

For those who bought the commercial release of the game, id also included an additional mission pack for *Wolfenstein 3D*. 'The Nocturnal Missions', as they are known, contained three more chapters for fans to sink their teeth into. This expansion pack was a prequel to the first campaign, where BJ is ordered to hunt down the scientist who is responsible for overseeing the manufacture of the Nazis' chemical weapons. In the first mission the player must find and kill the scientist by infiltrating a German weapons research facility. The second chapter finds BJ trying to retrieve the Nazis' plans to launch a chemical attack, and the final episode, which is set in Castle Offenbach, finds our hero trying to kill the general assigned with spearheading the campaign.

The first chapter of the game, which comprised of the first ten levels – each chapter, including those in the Nocturnal Missions, comprise ten levels each – was released as shareware through Apogee. By offering gamers the chance to freely



» [SNES] It's either him or you, so shoot first and ask questions later. In fact, forget the questions.



» [PC] Here's an in-game shot of our hero; try to work out how we got to take it. Answers on a £50 note.

» [iPhone] Carmack personally ported *Wolfenstein 3D*.





» [SNES] The SNES version removed all Nazi symbolism, for reasons that should be fairly obvious.

» [JAG] The Jaguar version is a great console port, and it's lightning quick too.



experience the game, this allowed *Wolfenstein 3D* to be tried, copied and easily shared and distributed among PC owners. It also proved a great way to strike up interest in the game and a brilliant way to get gamers anxiously thirsting for *Wolfenstein 3D*'s commercial release.

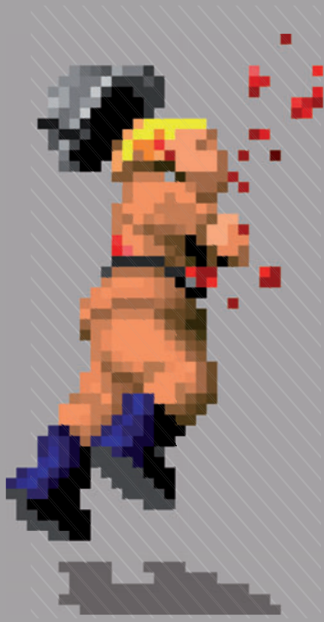
Romero tells us that all six episodes of *Wolfenstein 3D* took six months to create, and that included game engine development, which took the team one to two months. Given the cutting-edge nature of *Wolfenstein 3D*, you'd be forgiven for thinking that its development was riddled with bugs, issues and obstacles as John and the boys tried to finish their game while also getting to grips with their 3D engine, but he reveals that wasn't the case at all.

"The biggest problems we faced in those six months were Tom fighting boredom doing level design because making those levels was so completely braindead work due to the limitations of the tech and working on John Carmack to get the secret 'pushwall' code into the game so we could have secret areas. Those were really not big problems in reality; we just cranked ahead and got it done," Romero continues. "We were so experienced in making games by that time that we were very good at knowing when our games were fully scoped and when we were just executing on the design to finish. I've made all my games this way. Putting a date on when a game has to be done will ensure that your game will not ever reach its full potential. Game companies that release games when they're ready include Valve, id, Epic and Blizzard. I don't think anyone can argue with that approach."

Wolfenstein 3D was released in late 1991 and was an instant hit, with many PC owners copying the game to floppy disks and bandying it around to friends and work colleagues. Like a humorous internet video clip, the game's popularity and notoriety spread like wildfire. But while Romero feels that shareware certainly helped to spread the word on *Wolfenstein 3D* to the masses, ultimately, he believes that the reason for *Wolfenstein 3D*'s success can only really be put down to the quality of the game itself.

> AMERICA'S FIRST TOP MODDER

Another important aspect that helped *Wolfenstein 3D* to remain in the public's consciousness for long after its release was the fact that id would later openly release the game's source code into the public domain.



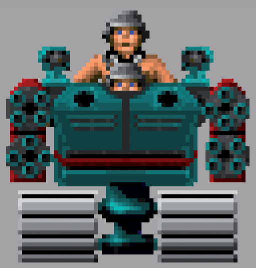
By doing so it would essentially usher in the whole modding community that games like *Doom* and *Quake* would further encourage and refine. By opening up the *Wolfenstein 3D* code for the entire world to see, it gave fans the opportunity to fiddle around with the game's internal workings, construct brand new levels and eke further enjoyment from the game.

"The huge success with allowing players to mod our games meant that releasing all of the game could ensure even more fun for the modders and also help the game's immortal status because others could port it to whatever OS they like, as a challenge for some," muses Romero.

Given *Wolfenstein 3D*'s popularity it was ported to every machine that could conceivably handle the 3D. Over the years, *Wolfenstein 3D* has appeared on the Apple IIGS, the Archimedes, the 3DO, the Game Boy Advance and the Super Nintendo, albeit in a toned-down Nintendo thumbs-up version (see 'Conversion Capers'), and has

WE ARE THE MODS

The web is chock full of new enemy sprites to upload into *Wolfenstein 3D*. If you want to get a good idea of what's available, head on over to Monkee's Image World (mmimageworld.dugtrio17.com), which has a great selection of character sprites to download. Here are just some of our favourites…



ATV
This impressive two-man ATV looks like it's been pulled straight from screens of *Metal Slug*.



Da Kangaroo
Those who have played *Super Noah's Ark 3D* will remember this jumpy boss. He wasn't brandishing the gun, though.



Chaingun Raven
There are a few *Metal Gear* characters to be found online, but this one, Vulcan Raven from *MGS*, was our favourite.



Count Von Richthofen
We think this character looks a lot like M Bison. He even has those eerie white eyes.



Meg Griffin
Poor old Meg, constantly the butt of the joke and now cannon fodder too.

recently been ported to the iPhone by John Carmack himself. So exactly how much input did Romero have in those many early ports of the game?

"I was involved in some fashion with most of them," he admits. "I did the Japanese and Taiwanese versions, worked on the Super Nintendo version, and a little on the Atari Jaguar version. The most difficult was the Super Nintendo version we did. Oh, and we also started porting it to the Atari Lynx but then Atari killed it."

With the success of *Wolfenstein 3D* still ringing in id's ears, it wasn't long before the guys decided to turn their attentions to producing a sequel. In less than a year, id released *Spear Of Destiny*, a prequel that retained *Wolfenstein*'s firmly bunkered-down WWII theme but took a somewhat more religious slant to its narrative.

The *Spear Of Destiny* story centred on Hitler's manic fascination with the Spear of Destiny: the lance that is believed to have pierced the side of Christ on the cross. It is said to make its possessor invincible and so is invariably seen by Hitler as an important tool in his plan for world domination. Having stolen the ancient artefact from a museum in Versailles, Hitler is said to be using the device to reanimate the dead in order to create an army. And so, once again, BJ is ordered to venture out into dangerous and claustrophobic ray-casted corridors, retrieve the spear and put an end to Hitler's plans. It's certainly a somewhat fanciful premise for a videogame, and one that we were intrigued as to where the idea came from. So, in our relentless quest for the truth here at **Retro Gamer**, we put the question to Romero.

"Well, that was Tom Hall's idea," he says. "And it was a great one because it dealt with Hitler's fascination with holy artefacts that he thought would give him power. What's really crazy is that there was a DC comic in the Seventies that had Hitler wielding the Spear of Destiny and trying to take over the world – totally bizarre, and Kevin Cloud found that comic years after we made *Spear*."

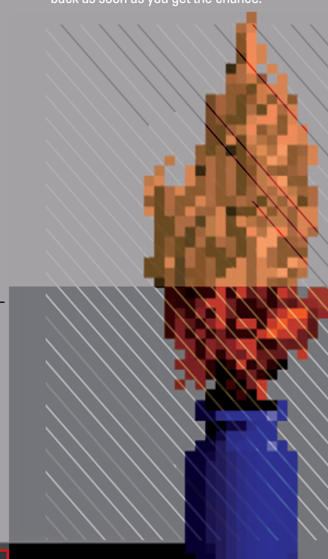
Spear Of Destiny was the last time that John would venture back into world of *Wolfenstein* in a programming capacity. As the series took a ten-year hiatus from our screens, eventually returning with aplomb in 2001 with *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, a fantastic 3D re-imagining that chugged from the astonishing *Quake III Arena* engine, id turned its attention to trying to refine the genre that it had single-handedly created and popularised. As we know, it would achieve its goal and then some, following up *Wolfenstein 3D* with *Doom* and *Quake*, and would once again set a precedent in videogames by introducing us all to the high-octane brilliance of network and online deathmatches, the glee-inducing delights of sticking a chainsaw into an imp, and the pant-destroying moment when you finally came face-to-face with a Cyberdemon.

In closing up our time with Romero, he remarks on the curious decade-long wait that has occurred between the release of *Wolfenstein* sequels: *Castle Wolfenstein* was released in 1981, *Wolfenstein 3D* in 1992, *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* in 2001, and Raven's new *Wolfenstein* title is currently earmarked for a 2010 release. Taking in the neat observation, it reminds us just how far the FPS genre goes back and how the *Wolfenstein* timeline serves as a wonderfully tidy snapshot to demonstrate how far videogames have come in a relatively short space of time. We finish up by asking John one last question: how does it feel to be partly responsible for kick-starting an entire videogame genre, a claim that very few programmers can make? "I think it's ROCKAWESOME!" he smiles.

"With Doom and Quake id started refining the genre that it had created and popularised"



» [PC] There are a few stealth elements – sort of – in *Wolfenstein 3D*, but our advice is to simply shoot people in the back as soon as you get the chance.



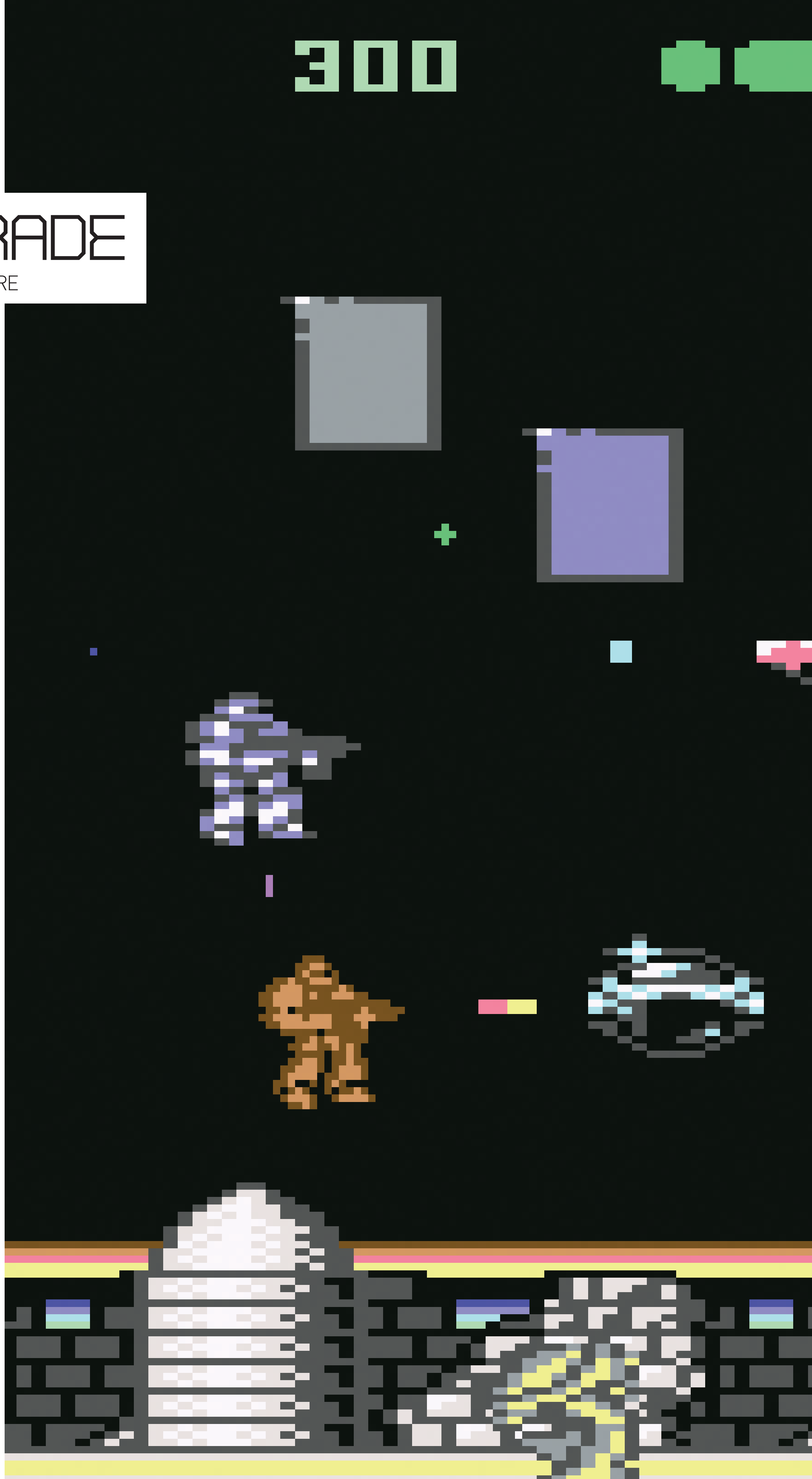


» [PC] Initially you'll only have to fend off the odd soldier, but this soon changes once you get deeper into Castle Wolfenstein.



» [PC] Dancing zombies are just one of the enemies to discover in *Wolfenstein 3D*.

Special thanks to Jan Baart for his invaluable DOSBOX help

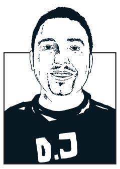


RETROGRADE

SPRITES, SPRITES EVERYWHERE



- » **PUBLISHER:** THALAMUS
- » **RELEASED:** 1989
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** COMMODORE 64
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2+



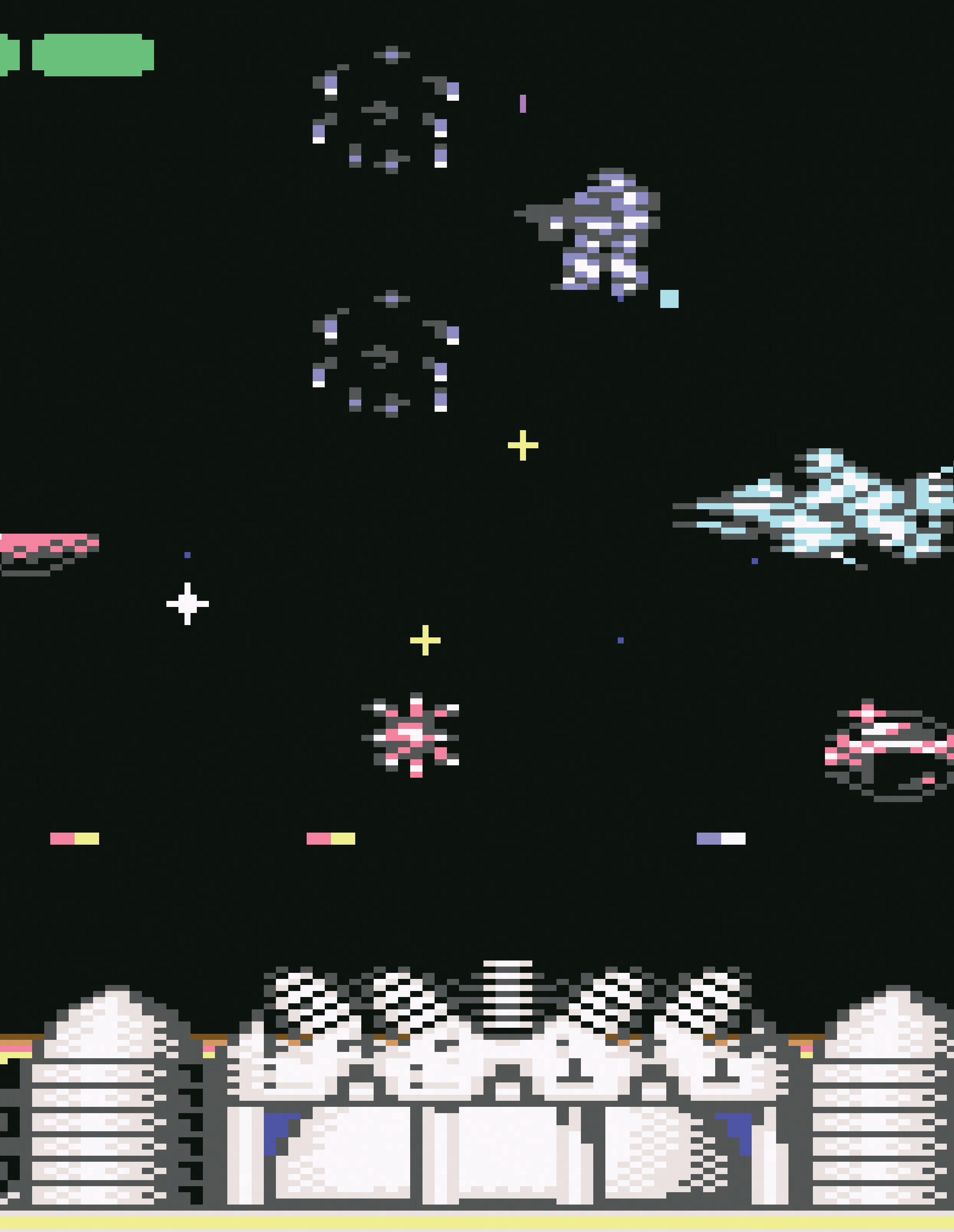
HISTORY

Let's face it, when it comes to shoot-'em-ups, Amstrad came a poor second to C64. Sure, you had the likes of Cybernoid, Light Force and Zynaps, but when it came to scrolling shooters, nothing could match the slickness and sheer liquid-smooth speed of Commodore's machine. Armalyte, Katakis, Salamander, Wizball – they all moved with a speedy grace that just wasn't possible on the CPC, and I would find myself inwardly flinching whenever I had to acknowledge to my smug mate that the C64 was indeed the better machine when it came to my favourite genre.

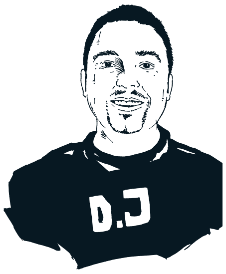
And so we come to *Retrograde*, one of the slickest shooters I've ever played on Commodore's 8-bit baby. Like a strange amalgamation of *Solar Jetman* and *Side Arms: Hyper Dyne*, *Retrograde* is an impossibly fast blaster that looks amazing thanks to its detailed sprites, huge bosses and super-slick scrolling. Published by Thalamus and coded by Transmission Software, it's the sheer ambition that impresses the most. There are 12 different weapons, which can be constantly upgraded and even sold off – as you can only hold a certain number at any one time – and they can be fired from 16 different points around your jet-propelled space marine. Stages switch between horizontal and vertical and feature the same incredibly smooth scrolling, while the gameplay is also pleasingly diverse and requires you to shut down the nerve centres found on each of *Retrograde's* seven planets.

Yes, it's insanely hard in places and it takes a certain amount of time to get used to the sheer speed of enemy sprites as they whizz past, but it does come together and when it does it is an utterly joyful experience.

In fact, so impressive were my afternoons spent on *Retrograde* that I finally swallowed my pride and demanded a machine for Christmas. I didn't get one until several years later, but needless to say, *Retrograde* was one of the first games that I actually bought for it.



RETRORATED



» Downloadable content is really starting to shine at the moment. Don't believe us? Check out *Space Invaders Extreme*, the long-overdue PSN port of *Worms*, and Live Arcade's *Banjo-Tooie*.

» SPACE INVADERS EXTREME

Live Arcade



» [Live Arcade] As its name suggests, *Extreme* features plenty of over-the-top weapons.

✱ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Space Invaders Extreme

» **Tomohiro Nishikado's designs for the original aliens were heavily based on *The War Of The Worlds*.**

» **The original concept of *Space Invaders* came about because Nishikado felt games like *Breakout* were too passive.**

» **Parody fans may want to track down *Space Invaders '95* – or *Akkanvader* as it's known in Japan – for a cute spin on the franchise.**

Space Invaders Extreme

TAITO'S ZANY REBOOT HITS LIVE ARCADE

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** DS, PSP
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** 800 POINTS
- » **PUBLISHER:** SQUARE ENIX
- » **DEVELOPER:** TAITO
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

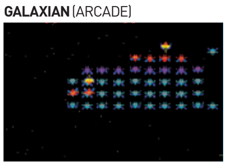
BRIEF HISTORY

» Released in 1978, *Space Invaders* is one of gaming's oldest franchises, with numerous updates and spin-offs over the past three decades. *Space Invaders Extreme* was released in 2008 to celebrate the franchise's 30th anniversary on DS and PSP. It's recent sequel is DS-only.

✱ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

GALAXIAN (ARCADE)



▼ SOMETHING NEW

GALAGA LEGIONS (LIVE ARCADE)





With a sequel recently released in Japan, Taito's magnificent Space Invaders update finally makes its way on to Xbox Live Arcade.

What's interesting – and perhaps a little surprising – is that this admittedly impressive-looking port has lost a certain je ne sais quoi during the transition to the big screen. It retains its gloriously fast and frenetic gameplay and its scintillating soundtrack, effortlessly enhancing the chaotic carnage that's taking place on the screen – there's even a nice pulsating thrum from the pad itself. However, it does slightly lose the immersion that both the DS and PSP versions boasted.

That said, *Space Invaders Extreme* remains the finest addition to the franchise to date and this latest version is no different. Xbox 360's high-resolution display has been put to great use here with bright, impossibly crisp visuals that, while fairly simplistic in appearance, are nevertheless sensational. Less impressive, however, are Jeff Minter's gaudy, eternally shifting backgrounds. While significantly toned-down in comparison to those seen in the PSP game, these canvases can occasionally still make *Extreme*'s fast-moving enemies tricky to follow, but you can switch it off. And it's great to see that Jeff has a presence on Xbox Live Arcade, although we can't, for the life of us, understand why his contribution couldn't have been a level with sheep and llamas to shoot.

Aside from the cosmetic alterations, this is pretty much business as usual, which means it's very, very, very good indeed. The same clever scoring system is in place, it remains perfect for short, frenzied blasts, and continues to prove that it's totally possible to improve on the classics of yesteryear. It also happens to be an absolute bargain at just 800 Points. Together with the fact that there's an excellent multiplayer mode that caters for up to four players, *Space Invaders Extreme* becomes one of Xbox Live Arcade's best blasters. What more incentive do you need? Download it this instant.

OPINION



Taito's revivalist shoot-'em-up was ace on DS. It took the original formula and cranked it up beyond recognition with an incredible blend of music, vibration and intense shooting action. Needless to say, I loved it. The Live Arcade version is even better thanks to some ultra trippy Jeff Minter-designed backgrounds.

Ashley Day

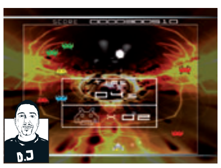
In a nutshell

We have been waiting for *Space Invaders Extreme* to come to the Live platform for what seems like an eternity, and it certainly doesn't disappoint. Polished and intelligent, this is a fiendishly addictive blaster at a bargain price point.

» Scores

Presentation	88%
Graphics	80%
Sound	90%
Playability	96%
Addictivity	92%
Overall	**93%**

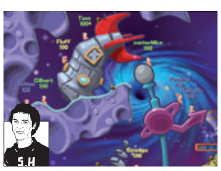
✱ PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN

Space Invaders Extreme

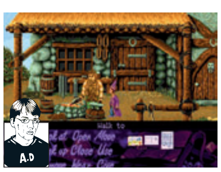
Awesome gameplay, mind-melting visuals and loads to shoot. What's not to like?



STUART

Worms

It's a little late to the party but this PSN version of *Worms* is still amazing fun to play.



ASH

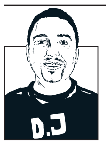
Simon The Sorcerer

One of my favourite adventure games ever… maybe even better than *Monkey Island*.

Pikmin 2

AND YOU THOUGHT THE FIRST GAME WAS GOOD...

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** Wii » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £29.99 » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO » **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



Considering the lengthy wait between the original GameCube Pikmin games, it's pleasing to see that the excellent sequel is already available on Wii. You'll also be interested to hear that after the disappointment that was Mario Power Tennis, Nintendo's New Play Control! range is back on form as Pikmin 2 is as effortless to control as its elder brother but greatly benefits due to being a far better game.

The most obvious change from *Pikmin 2* is how the frustrating 30-day limit in the original is no longer in place, meaning you have much more time to explore the beautiful organic world. Then there's the fact that there's a new captain, which means that you can now play co-operatively. Best of all, however, is the addition of two new Pikmin as well as a new sub-species, which greatly expands the completion possibilities available on each level.

In fact, if we had to lay some negativity towards Nintendo's wonderful sequel, it's that it's let down by some really frustrating cave levels that ever-so-slightly dampen its otherwise outstanding design. Greatly ramping up the difficulty level – you can't re-grow the Pikmin you take into the caves with you – it tarnishes an otherwise impeccable update. Fortunately, perseverance does pay off, meaning you can quickly get back to the above-ground shenanigans.

Even if you have recently picked up *Pikmin*, there are more than enough new tricks and flourishes here to make *Pikmin 2* an essential purchase. Now, there's some fine praise indeed.

» Scores

Presentation	85%
Graphics	95%
Sound	90%
Playability	91%
Addictivity	92%
Overall	**91%**



» [Wii] You know the rule: the bigger they are, the harder they fall.





OPINION

When old games are remade for Wii they are sometimes ruined by gimmicky motion controls. Thankfully, Nintendo has treated this GameCube remake with the respect it deserves. Now it's just a little bit better than the already brilliant original.

Ashley Day



Pro Pinball: Timeshock!

» **SYSTEM:** PC
» **PRICE:** $5.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **Several Pro Pinball** games are now available at **gog.com**, but *Timeshock!* is easily the best. Set across four time zones, it features convincing physics, plenty of excellent features and an absolutely massive number of secrets to discover. The lack of tables is a disappointment, but what's available is still easily worth the low asking price.

» Score **82%**

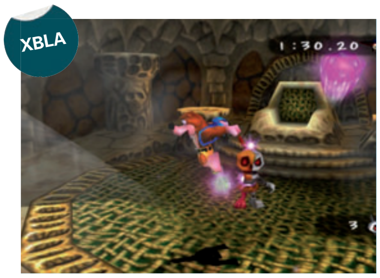


Worms

» **SYSTEM:** PSN
» **PRICE:** £7.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

» **It's taken its** sweet time, but *Worms* is finally available on PlayStation 3 and it's every bit as good as its Xbox Live counterpart. There are a few new weapons and the DLC from the Live Arcade version now comes as standard, but this is an otherwise identical port. The cartoony visuals look excellent, the gameplay is as addictive as ever, and it plays brilliantly online. Don't miss out.

» Score **89%**



Banjo-Tooie

» **SYSTEM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
» **PRICE:** 1,200 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **While the original** *Banjo-Kazooie* remains a wonderfully balanced platformer, its sequel just isn't up to standard. There's far too much backtracking throughout the gigantic worlds, while tasks lack the charm of *Banjo-Kazooie*. Emulation wise, everything is great and wonderfully polished, but all the hi-res sheen in the world can't hide the fact that *Tooie's* starting to feel a little tired.

» Score **76%**



Galaxy Force II

» **SYSTEM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

» **Galaxy Force II gets** 100 per cent for effort, but the Mega Drive conversion was never ever going to replicate the awesome visuals and sickening speed of the arcade original. Ugly sprites, jerk-o-vision scrolling and worrying collision detection all combine to create an absolute pig of a game that plays as poorly now as it did back in 1991. Our advice? Leave well alone, it'll only end in tears.

» Score **32%**

» PUNCH-OUT!!

INFORMATION

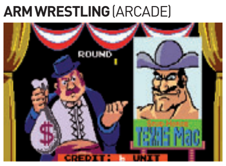
- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** Wii
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £39.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** NEXT LEVEL GAMES
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

BRIEF HISTORY

» The original arcade version of *Punch-Out!!* was released in 1984, with a NES outing, *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!*, appearing three years later. Boxer Little Mac, who first appeared in the NES game and then in the SNES's *Super Punch-Out!!*, once again returns along with his trainer Doc Louis.

★WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
ARM WRESTLING (ARCADE)



▽ SOMETHING NEW
READY 2 RUMBLE: REVOLUTION (WII)

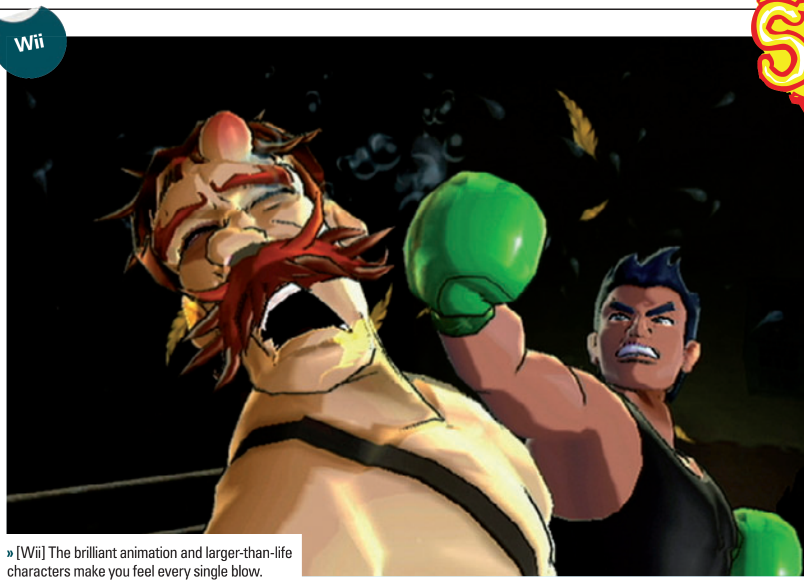


★ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Punch-Out!!

» *Punch-Out!!* received a spin-off game in the form of *Arm Wrestling*, an arcade game that was released in 1985.

» As well as appearing in all the home console outings, Little Mac also featured in the *Captain N* and *Nintendo Comics System* comics.



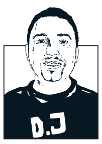
» [Wii] The brilliant animation and larger-than-life characters make you feel every single blow.



» [Wii] He may be large of girth, but knock King Hippo down and he won't be getting back up.

NINTENDO SCORES A DIRECT KNOCK OUT

Punch-Out!!

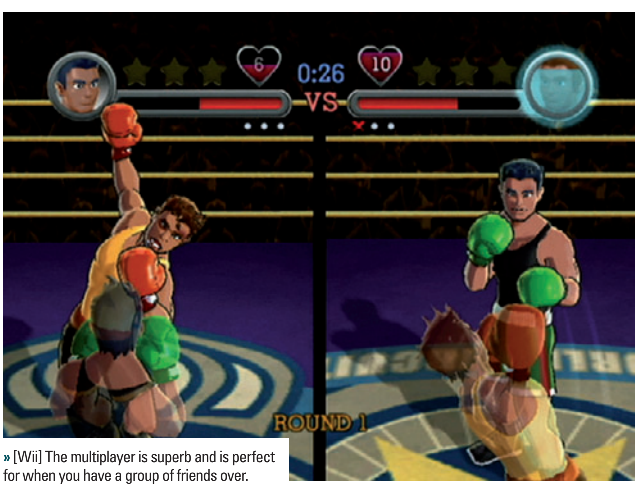


Developer Next Level Games may not have any huge titles under its belt – past releases range from *Super Mario Strikers* to *Spider-Man: Friend Or Foe* – but that hasn't stopped it from giving Nintendo's famous boxing series a sensational makeover. Not only has *Punch-Out!!* been brought bang up to date with fantastic-looking cartoony visuals, it also boasts the same accessible controls that made the NES game so much fun to play.

Indeed, if you want to forgo the use of the Balance Board – which works surprisingly well – or the Remote and Nunchuck setup, you can simply opt for pretty much the same traditional system that works so well on the Virtual Console version of *Punch-Out!!*. Gameplay mechanics are also pretty much identical, meaning that while there's plenty of frenzied fighting, careful timing is just as important as pulling off a devastating flurry of punches.

This is never more apparent than as you start making your way through the three available circuits and competing against *Punch-Out!!*'s 15 opponents. While early boxers like Glass Joe can be taken down with simple brute force, later adversaries require close scrutiny – a subtle tell will give you an idea of their next attack – as well as incredibly precise timing in order to get the upper hand. Complete these and you'll face the same three circuits, although this time your adversaries have a whole new range of attacks, effectively doubling the already impressive roster that includes plenty of old faces from the NES and Super NES titles as well as several brand new pugilists. Longevity is also assured thanks to a neat exhibition mode that enables you to fight any defeated boxers and a truly excellent multiplayer mode that turns it into the ultimate party game.

Ultimately, *Punch-Out!!* succeeds because Next Level Games has simply given the source material an incredible amount of care and attention. Despite the glorious cel-shaded visuals that give the likes of Bear Hugger and Don Flamenco a whole new lease of life, everything remains instantly familiar if you ever played the NES or SNES outings. Even the music is the same. The lack of an ability to play online is a missed opportunity, but in terms of a reboot, this remains an outstanding effort that does the franchise proud.



» [Wii] The multiplayer is superb and is perfect for when you have a group of friends over.

OPINION



After enjoying *Punch-Out!!* and *Super Punch-Out!!* on the Virtual Console, the franchise has finally come full circle. This latest edition is absolutely stunning and features some terrific animation, challenging fighters and a truly tremendous multiplayer mode that works far better than it should. An excellent update.

Stuart Hunt

In a nutshell

Stylish, impossibly polished and above all amazing fun to play, *Punch-Out!!* is a sensational update that captures the spirit of past games but still manages to feel like a brand new experience.

» Scores

Presentation	90%
Graphics	93%
Sound	84%
Playability	95%
Addictivity	92%
Overall	**94%**

Duke Nukem 3D: Atomic Edition

TIME TO START HAILING THE KING AGAIN

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** $5.99 » **PUBLISHER:** GOG.COM » **DEVELOPER:** 3D REALMS ENTERTAINMENT » **PLAYERS:** 1+



With the downsizing of 3D Realms and the reality that *Duke Nukem Forever* is now unlikely to appear – like it was going to anyway – take solace in the knowledge that Duke's old adventures are still available.

Realising that gamers are always looking for bargains, Good Old Games' digital download of the popular first-person shooter is the *Atomic Edition*, meaning you get a brand new episode, several new enemies and a new weapon in the form of the Microwave Expander. There's also a bot mode, meaning that you can still have some decent deathmatches without needing to play online.

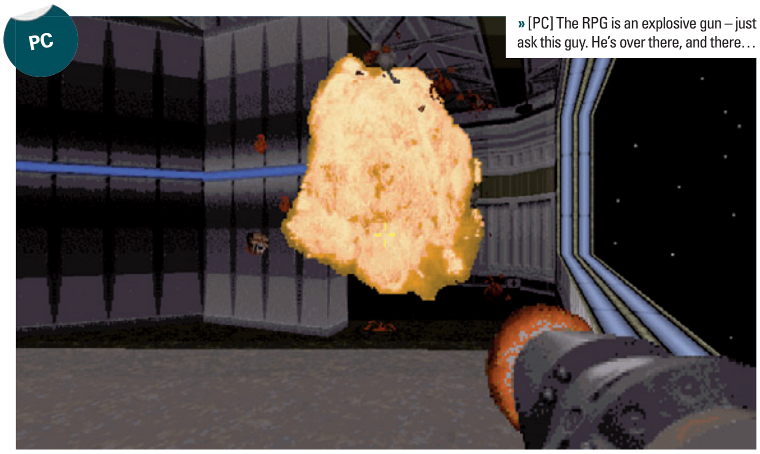
Granted, the visuals are looking mightily long in the tooth, but they nevertheless retain a certain charm that perfectly complements that tongue-in-cheek humour that the Duke and 3D Realms were able to pull off so well. If the graphics disappoint, you'll be pleased to hear that *Duke Nukem 3D*'s tight level design still shines through, and while it's not quite up to the standards of *Doom*, its sheer variety still manages to shine through. Familiar locations like the nightclub, cinema and porn shop may no longer surprise you – their secrets have long been discovered – but they're still full of atmosphere and teeming with rock-hard enemies.

Yes it's been surpassed by a great many first-person shooters over the years, but the Duke's first 3D outing remains his very best and you're getting a hell of a lot of gameplay in this package for what amounts to around a fiver.

» Scores

Presentation	70%
Graphics	68%
Sound	58%
Playability	84%
Addictivity	82%
Overall	**83%**

PC



» [PC] The RPG is an explosive gun – just ask this guy. He's over there, and there…



OPINION



Maybe it's the pithy catchphrases, maybe it's the OTT weapons, but there's still something enjoyable about *Duke Nukem 3D*. Yes, it feels rather quaint, but there's a lot to discover, and the excellent content makes this well worth the small asking price.

Darran Jones

PC



Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

» **SYSTEM:** PC
» **PRICE:** $9.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **It's a little** more expensive than GOG's usual releases, but *Abe's Oddysee* remains an excellent little game that's certainly worth a download. The controls feel a little clunkier than before and it's stupidly difficult in places, but Abe remains such a likeable character that it's difficult to not get sucked in.

» Score **80%**

Wii



Anno: Create A New World

» **SYSTEM:** WII
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

» **Also available on** the DS, *Create A New World* is a solid micro-management title that plays like a cross between *Civilization* and *Pirates!*. Completely repackaged for the Wii, it features an excellent story mode, decent controls and smaller worlds that are far easier to manage than their PC equivalents. An excellent effort.

» Score **81%**

Live Arcade



Family Game Night

» **SYSTEM:** LIVE ARCADE
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS EACH » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

» **Now this is** cynical. EA has taken six bland board games including *Battleships*, *Sorry*, *Boggle* and *Connect 4* and is expecting you to pay 800 Points (around £6) for each one. To make matters worse, each game is overseen by Mr sodding Potato Head, whose grating accent makes you want to smash your TV up. Even the trials aren't worth the time they take to download. Avoid.

» Score **30%**

PC



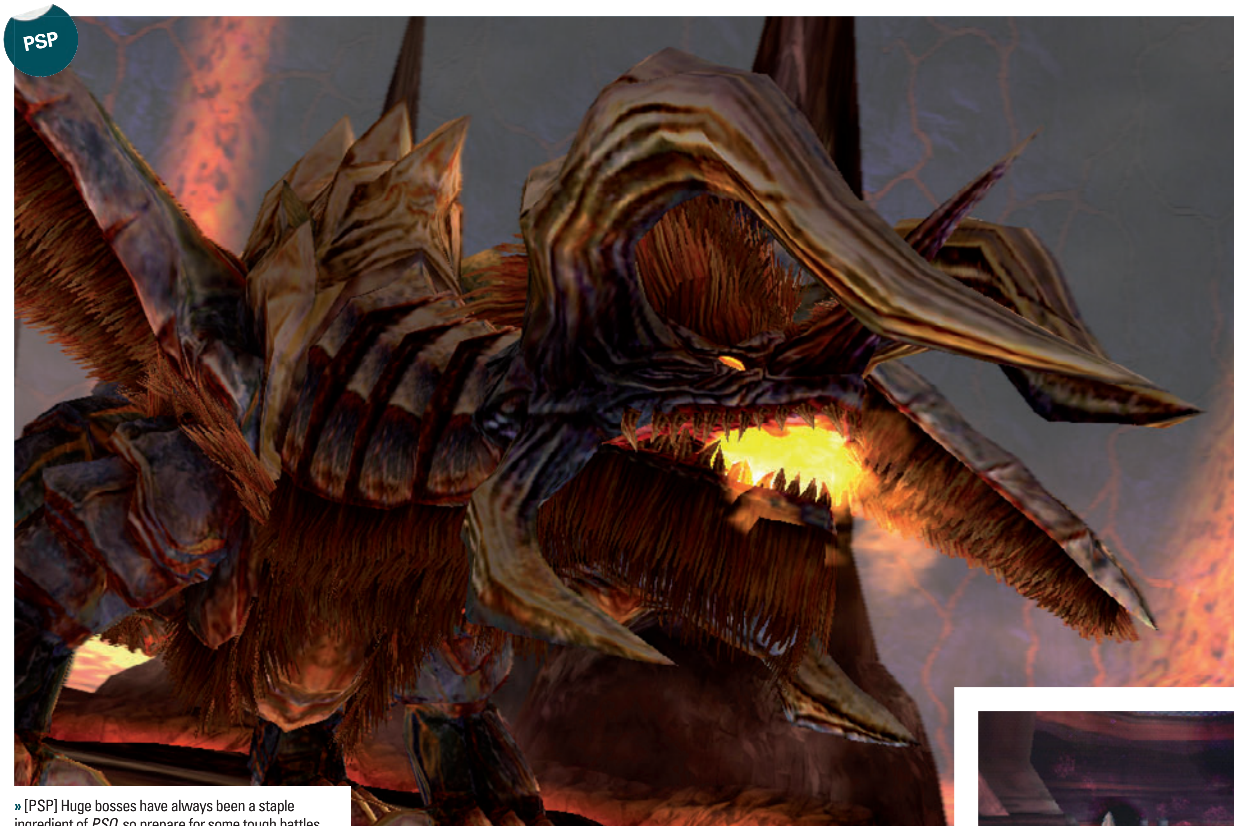
Simon The Sorcerer

» **SYSTEM:** PC
» **PRICE:** $5.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **With point-and-click adventures** on the brink of a comeback we've found ourselves engrossed in this charming effort from Adventure Soft. While not quite up to the early *Monkey Island* games, *Simon The Sorcerer* remains an excellent effort with great visuals, plenty of clever puzzles and some impressive voice acting. (This is the later CD-ROM effort and not the early floppy disk version.)

» Score **85%**

» PHANTASY STAR PORTABLE



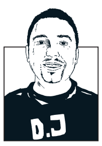
PSP

» [PSP] Huge bosses have always been a staple ingredient of *PSO*, so prepare for some tough battles.



SEGA'S LATEST RPG IS PORTABLE BUT NOT PERFECT

Phantasy Star Portable



Phantasy Star has come a long way since its humble Master System beginnings. While this latest portable edition is far from perfect, fans should nevertheless get a huge kick out of it. After all, how can you really mess up Phantasy Star Online?

Firstly, Sega has refined the issues that proved bothersome in *Phantasy Star Universe*. It's now possible to use the same avatar in both the online and offline modes and the needless running around has been replaced by easy-to-visit menu screens that let you do everything from buying weapons to visiting new planets.

The slick, comprehensive interface is bolstered by some excellent presentation, while some missions have been simplified thanks to the ability to take up to three computer-controlled players with you. The storyline – which is sandwiched between *Universe* and its expansion, *Ambition Of The Illuminus* – is admittedly as bland as ever, but it's always been the combat that has seen *Phantasy Star* excel. And this latest version is no different.

Although locking on to enemies can sometimes be a little fiddly, the available button setup is intuitive so you'll soon be taking down a selection of enemies with subtle button combinations, or instantly healing yourself if battles get too hectic. Your team-mates' AI is also solid so you can always go into battle safe in the knowledge that you'll be healed up should your hit points drop too low.

The bosses and enemies returning from *PSU* look mightily impressive on the PSP's razor-sharp screen, and the beautiful orchestral score that plays throughout will be instantly familiar to fans. In fact, the only real issue we have with *Phantasy Star Portable* is that there's no proper online mode, meaning you must rely on finding three friends with a copy of the game. There's a chance that this may be rectified, but it's still a major oversight, especially when you consider how important the online play was in previous iterations of the game.

Nevertheless, despite this glaring issue, *Phantasy Star Portable* remains a polished and enjoyable role-playing game that is bound to please PlayStation Portable's *Monster Hunter* crowd, not to mention the long-term fans.

In a nutshell

Yes, the lack of online play is a massive omission, but *Phantasy Star Portable's* core gameplay is sound and Sega has done its level best to rectify all the issues that plagued *Universe*. This one comes highly recommended.

INFORMATION

- **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PSP
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £34.99
- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **DEVELOPER:** SONIC TEAM/ALFA SYSTEM
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4

BRIEF HISTORY

» First released on the Master System in 1987, *Phantasy Star* started off life as a sci-fi-themed RPG before being rebooted as an online RPG for Sega's Dreamcast. This latest iteration is based on *Phantasy Star Universe* and its add-on, *Ambition Of The Illuminus*.

OPINION



I hope an official, easy-to-use online solution for *Phantasy Star Portable* comes along, because it's great fun with other players. Teamwork becomes essential on later levels and while the grinding sometimes gets a little boring, I'm still finding it very hard to tear myself away.

Stuart Hunt

★ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Phantasy Star Portable

» **When *Phantasy Star* was released in the US, the game was reported to have fetched a staggeringly high $80 in some retail outlets.**

» **If you're a fan of *Phantasy Star* but don't have a PSP then wait for the DS's *Phantasy Star Zero*, out later this year.**

★ WHY NOT TRY

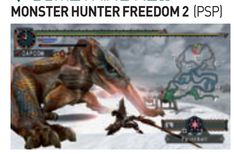
▼ SOMETHING OLD

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE (DREAMCAST)



▽ SOMETHING NEW

MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM 2 (PSP)



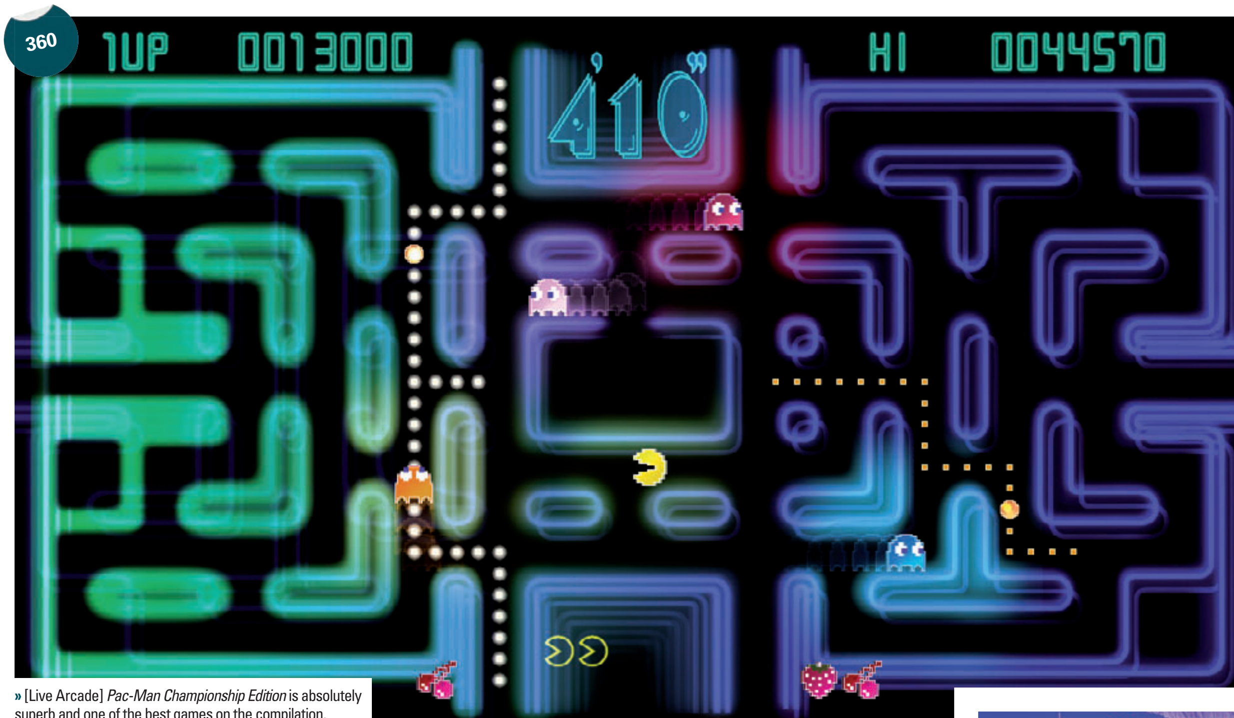
» Scores

Presentation	85%
Graphics	76%
Sound	84%
Playability	76%
Addictivity	79%

Overall 77%

» NAMCO MUSEUM: VIRTUAL ARCADE

360



» [Live Arcade] *Pac-Man Championship Edition* is absolutely superb and one of the best games on the compilation.

✱ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Namco Museum: Virtual Arcade

» Namco's very first arcade game was called *Gee Bee*. Interestingly, it's also *Pac-Man* creator Toru Iwatani's first title.

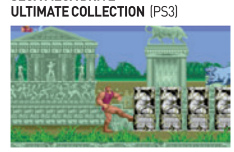
» Namco was originally founded in 1955 and started off life making mechanical rocking horses and similar rides.

✱ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
NAMCO MUSEUM VOL 1 (PLAYSTATION)



▽ SOMETHING NEW
SEGA MEGA DRIVE ULTIMATE COLLECTION (PS3)





NAMCO'S COMPILATION BOTH EXCITES AND INFURIATES

Namco Museum: Virtual Arcade



We've never been huge fans of Namco's *Museum* series. Over the years, the company has seen fit to only release a few titles from its huge back catalogue for each disc, and it rarely deviates from the regulars like *Pac-Man*, *Galaga* and *Dig Dug* for each new expansion.

Sadly, this latest release follows the same system, and while there are some truly fantastic games on it, it's all marred by one of the most annoying front-ends that we've ever seen. The biggest allure for many will be that all nine of Namco's Xbox Live releases, including the astonishing *Pac-Man Championship Edition*, are all available. The kicker, however, is that all the Live Arcade releases are presented on a separate menu and you have to download the games from Live – they're not included on the actual disc. Once they've been downloaded, you can only play them when the disc is in the machine, and it exits to the Xbox's menu if you want to go from one release to another, meaning a reboot if you want to go from the likes of *Galaga Legions* to *Super Pac-Man*.

It's an incredibly clumsy system that's further hampered by annoyingly lengthy loads between games and the fact that the older titles don't have any Achievements, although there are obviously 200 each for the nine Live Arcade offerings. It's a real pity that the front-end is so sloppy, though, as there are an additional 22 classic titles, ranging from *Metro-Cross* (renamed to *Retro-Cross*) and *Pole Position II* to *Sky Kid Deluxe* – a first for the series – and the emulation on them appears to be perfect. Namco has also included arrangements of *Pac-Man*, *Dig Dug* and *Galaga*, meaning there's a grand total of 34 different games to choose from in this package. An impressive number, to be sure, but it's still not a patch on Sega's recent effort, especially when you consider that the ravages of time haven't exactly been particularly kind to quite a few of the included games here.

Having said that, *Namco Museum: Virtual Arcade* still represents excellent value for money – unless, of course, you don't have access to Xbox Live, meaning you'll immediately be losing out on nine games. It's just a shame it's been created in such a cack-handed way.

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX 360
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £29.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- » **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

BRIEF HISTORY

» *Namco Museum* collections were first released on the PlayStation in 1995 and have since appeared on everything from the Game Boy Advance to the PSP. Many of the games are from Namco's earlier arcade days and include such classics as *Pac-Man*, *Galaxian* and *Pole Position*.

OPINION



There are some good games here, but this hasn't really clicked with me in the same way that Sega's recent compilation did. Add in the fact that the front-end is truly borked and you really have to ask yourself why Namco would want to alienate so many non-Live users.

Stuart Hunt

In a nutshell

While there's a solid range of varied and truly excellent titles, it's a sloppy package. Take a good 20% off the final score if you're not online.

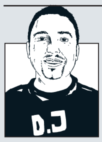
» Scores

Presentation	40%
Graphics	85%
Sound	80%
Playability	92%
Addictivity	90%
Overall	**80%**

Underworlds

DUNGEON HACKING GOES MOBILE

» **SYSTEM:** iPHONE » **PRICE:** 59P » **GET IT FROM:** iTUNES



If you had told us that we'd be able to play a superb *Diablo* clone on our iPhone just six short months ago we'd have laughed in your face. The joke's on us, though, as continual clever use of the iPhone's multi-touch screen means that more and more complex games are starting to appear on the system. *Underworlds* is just one such example and it's a truly polished release that will instantly thrill dungeon hack fans.

Taking on the role of a generic sword for hire, you're soon sent to a nondescript tavern and given a few basic quests. While a control dial does exist, it's far more effective to simply tap on the places you want to move to or examine. Attacking monsters is just as simple, with a single press automatically placing you in attack mode, where you'll continually swing your weapon until your enemy is dead. Special abilities that can slowly be enhanced as you level up are also on hand and, again, are activated by a quick press of the screen. It's a wonderfully simple mechanic that works exceptionally well and allows you to simply concentrate on the monster-bashing at hand.

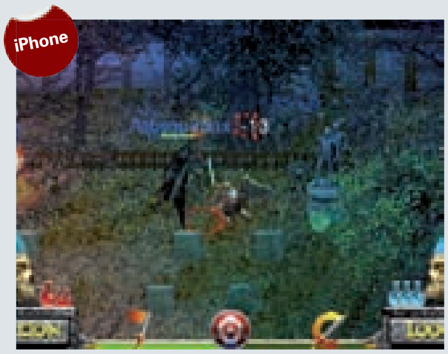
The lack of different character classes and the general shortness with which *Underworlds* can be completed is a little disappointing, but this is otherwise an excellent title that every iPhone owner needs in their collection.

» Scores

Presentation	85%
Graphics	93%
Sound	75%
Playability	89%
Addictivity	94%
Overall	**91%**



» [iPhone] It's a short game, but you can't really argue with the 59p asking price.





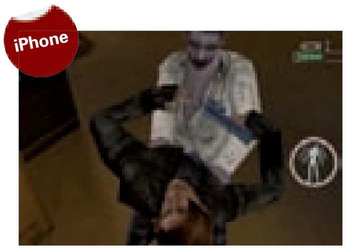
OPINION

Yes it's short, but an astonishing amount of greatness has been packed into *Underworlds*. Beautiful to look at and featuring excellent controls, it's a wonderful game that's perfectly suited for playing on the move. I'd love to see an update, though. Fingers crossed, eh?

Stuart Hunt

Resident Evil: Degeneration

» **SYSTEM:** iPHONE » **PRICE:** £3.99
» **GET IT FROM:** iTUNES

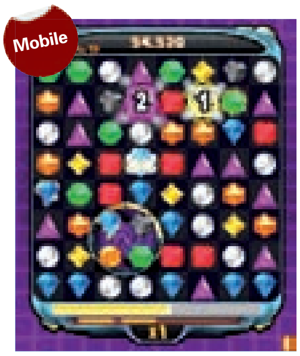


» Now here's an ambitious effort. Capcom has attempted to cram a *Resident Evil 4*-styled epic into the iPhone and it very nearly succeeds. Looking absolutely sensational and boasting the same over-the-shoulder view that's been so popular in *Resident Evil 4* and *5*, *Degeneration* is let down by its finicky controls, with you often accidentally moving Leon when lining up a shot. It's not game-breaking by any means, but it does ruin what is otherwise a highly polished game and an interesting addition to the franchise. There's even a Mercenaries mode. Needless to say, we'll be keeping an eye out for a sequel.

» Score **70%**

Bejeweled Twist

» **SYSTEM:** MOBILE (J2ME FORMAT) » **PRICE:** £3+
» **GET IT FROM:** POPCAP GAMES

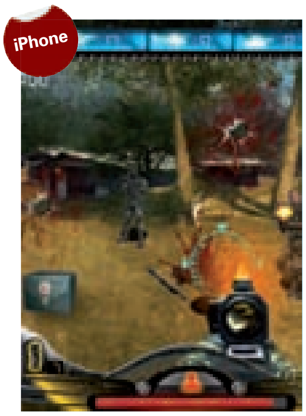


» PopCap continues its domination of the casual gaming market with this popular twist on its phenomenally successful *Bejeweled* franchise. The twist – to use a pun here – is that you now rotate blocks of 2x2 gems to form matches of three of more. It's a significant addition to the game that's further enhanced by a selection of new gem additions ranging from bomb gems to lumps of coal that can only be removed by explosions. Add in some tight, responsive controls and accessible, easy to pick up gameplay and PopCap has yet another winner on its hands.

» Score **90%**

Operation iWolf

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** 59P
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES

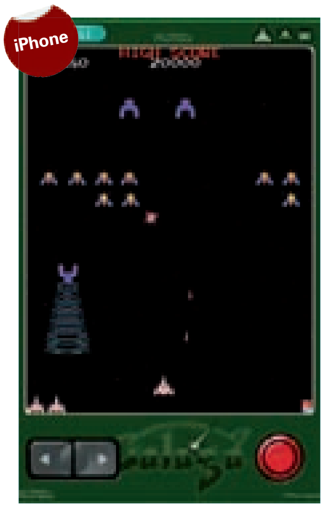


» Dear oh dear. This may be similar to Taito's classic blaster in name and concept, but that's as far as this awful game goes. For starters, the control of your crosshair is appalling, with it taking an age to respond to your on-screen directions. It jerks this way and that with all the grace of an inebriated hippo that's spent a night celebrating at its sister's wedding, while the animation of the on-screen enemies is just as poor. Considering the price point, this is an incredibly poor effort that should be avoided at all costs.

» Score **33%**

Galaga Remix

» **SYSTEM:** iPHONE » **PRICE:** £3.49
» **GET IT FROM:** iTUNES



» **Namco continues its** assault on iPhone users with a remake of its hit arcade blaster *Galaga*. Containing both the arcade original and a great remix mode that features some really fantastic-looking bosses – which are very similar to previous 'Arranged' versions – and it's another solid effort that features great-looking visuals, wonderfully addictive gameplay and a variety of different control schemes. The small arrow keys – arguably the best control choice – can sometimes be a little hard to hit when things start getting hectic, but it very rarely results in the loss of a life. It's certainly no *Space Invaders Extreme*, but *Galaga Remix* is definitely worth a purchase if you're a fan of both the original and the genre.

» Score **80%**



Payback

» **SYSTEM:** iPHONE » **PRICE:** £2.99
» **GET IT FROM:** iTUNES

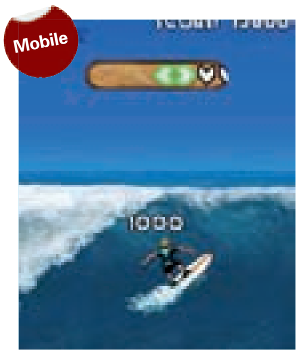
» **We really want** to love *Payback*, but it keeps pushing us away. Fiddly from the get-go, it's an overly ambitious port that suffers from occasionally dodgy controls that get more troublesome the further you progress.

It's a pity, as there's otherwise a lot to enjoy. Missions are varied, with a selection of engaging scenarios to complete, and it's graphically impressive with only the odd drop in frame rate here and there. There's also a strong, dynamic soundtrack. What a pity, then, that the tilt-screen controls and the tiny icons used to select weapons let it all down.

» Score **62%**

California Games X

» **SYSTEM:** MOBILE » **PRICE:** £3+
» **GET IT FROM:** EIDOS MOBILE

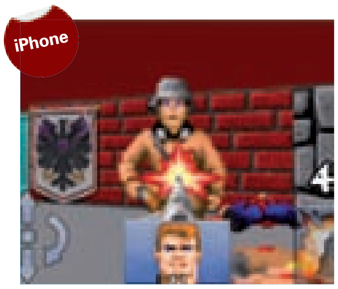


» **Well this is** a disappointment. We've loved the various releases of *California Games* over the years, but this latest offering is incredibly poor. It's nothing more than a very basic rhythm-action game – everything from wall-climbing to BMX stunts are activated by pressing the correct on-screen prompts – and gets tired very, very quickly. Add in the fact that there's no multiplayer support, only six different events and a few game modes, and *California Games X* is best left to the die-hard fans only. In fact, even they probably won't be impressed by it. We weren't.

» Score **45%**

Wolfenstein 3D

» **SYSTEM:** iPHONE » **PRICE:** £1.19
» **GET IT FROM:** iTUNES



» **Personally converted for** the iPhone by John Carmack himself, *Wolfenstein 3D* is a great conversion of id's hit PC game that is as frenzied and frantic as it is politically incorrect. Unsurprisingly, the controls themselves do suffer slightly and are no substitute for a proper computer setup or even a controller, but Carmack should still be commended for just how well *Wolfenstein 3D* actually plays on the tiny touch screen of Apple's phone. Otherwise this is business as usual, and you get a surprising amount of gameplay in the package for just a few quid. So all that's left to say now is, 'Where the hell is *Doom*, Carmack?'

» Score **82%**

CHATTER BOX

» We're still addicted to the excellent Thrust clone that is Dropship, so we decided to get in touch with creator **Tim Omernick** and find out how it all happened...



Where did the idea for *Dropship* originate?
Tim Omernick: We wanted to do a simple arcade game that harnessed the iPhone's unique capabilities. We started making a clone of the game *Thrust* and it gradually morphed into *Dropship*. Readers who are familiar with *Thrust* or *Gravitar* should see the similarities. We were also inspired by the visuals and sound in *Rez*.

I decided early on to turn it into a 3D game with 2D controls. This allowed me to keep the controls simple while making the graphics really pop out.

How long did it take to create?
TO: *Dropship* took about two months to create. We spent most of that time trying different flight mechanics, control schemes, camera angles, and visual directions. At one point it had accelerometer controls and felt like a helicopter game. There was also a version where you transformed into a jet if you flew left or right for a few seconds. I think we tried and threw away three different game designs by the time we settled on the final *Dropship*.

What was the most difficult challenge?
TO: The graphics look pretty simple but there is a lot going on. It was a lot of work to make the game run at a decent frame rate! I used to work at Apple and helped create the iPhone, so I had plenty of tricks up my sleeve. Even still, it was difficult to make *Dropship* run that smoothly!

Can we expect any additional updates?
TO: We occasionally make new levels, which automatically show up in the game. I don't know if we are going to do any more updates or a sequel. Maybe if enough people ask for it!

Why do you think retro-styled games are popular?
TO: Everyone has a different definition of "retro". For me, that was the 8-bit era, when the NES was king. I grew up playing *Mario*, *Mega Man* and *Metroid*. I am too young to remember *Thrust* but I have gone back and played a lot of old arcade games. In some ways they are more fun and creative than what is coming out now.

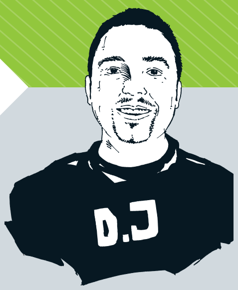
I like "retro" games because they remind me of a simpler time, when fun mattered more than graphics. When only gamers played games. You couldn't make videogames look very realistic, so you put more effort into simply making them fun!

Also simple graphics leave more up to the imagination. If you try to make a realistic game and you fall short, people feel disappointed.

Right now I am working on a first-person shooter for iPhone. The working title is *LiveFire*. I think [it's going to be] a lot of fun playing it and I can't wait to release it this summer! Keep an eye on **www.ngmoco.com** for information about it.

HOMEBREW

» The scene's latest news and reviews



More homebrew madness as we take a look at a brand new release for the BBC Micro, as well as new games for the Spectrum, C64 and ZX81. We've also rounded up all the latest and best remakes and reveal some exciting news from ZX Shed's Lee Fogarty. The homebrew scene is still alive and kicking and we'll be there to cover every single part of it...



» [BBC Micro] Hello mother, hello father.



» [BBC Micro] A chilling morality tale… not really!





» [BBC Micro] An eye for an eye.

ZAP

BLASTING OFF WITH THE BBC!



FORMAT: BBC MICRO
DEVELOPED BY: JAMIE WOODHOUSE
LINK: WWW.RETROSOFTWARE.CO.UK/ZAP
RELEASE DATE: 2009
PRICE: £1.95 (CASSETTE) OR £2.95 (3.5" OR 5.25" DISK)
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

Zap is a space-bound shoot-'em-up for the BBC Micro that was originally developed by programmer Jamie Woodhouse before he went on to produce the excellent Beeb platformer *Qwak* (the same one that he has since converted to the Amiga, Game Boy Advance and PC). But while *Qwak* was released and both games were developed around the time in the BBC's history when new commercial software was becoming more difficult to find, for some reason *Zap* remained stashed away in Jamie's disk box. As we've noted previously with games like *Quikman 2008*, leaving a project unfinished in this way can nag at a programmer.

So here we are about 20 years down the line and *Zap* has been brought out of storage to be dusted down a little and made ready to appear on the international stage. Jamie Woodhouse has made some changes to his original code before passing it over to be published by BBC Micro specialist Retro Software, which in turn has done a sterling job of making *Zap* available to buy on three different mediums (cassette, 5.25" disk and 3.5" disk), each being shipped with a full colour inlay.

The action in *Zap* is, as the name would probably suggest, not exactly sedate; the story talks a little about a century-long battle between humanity and the ominous-sounding Dark Empire and of how Earth is losing badly to the point of essentially being doomed to oblivion, but, when it's boiled down to the essentials, the only possible option left is for a single pilot to clamber into a one-person spacecraft, head out into battle, and give those meanies the kind of good, solid kicking they won't forget in a hurry.

Cues are taken from a number of shoot-'em-ups, Retro Software's website mentions Tehkan's excellent *Star Force* as one inspiration, and I'd be surprised if the *Galaforce* games from Superior Software on the BBC weren't a major influence as well. The player-controlled ship hurtles through the starry void looking for the Dark Empire's forces, which arrive grouped into waves to swirl around the play area while they disgorge bullets with alarming accuracy. The basic rule of thumb here is to shoot first and not even worry about asking questions later, and anything that doesn't immediately blow up either requires more shots because it's an end of level boss or should probably be avoided.

In-game graphics are sparse but functional, with some nice use of colour on the sprites, and everything moves smoothly, but the sound is somewhat weak since it's been pretty much limited to the explosions of aliens and player craft without any other noises, jingles or music. *Zap* isn't another *Fire Track*, but that's in part because it wasn't trying to be, and the only thing stopping it being comparable to *Galaforce* is that limited sound. The graphics are on a par and the bullet-spitting gameplay has been tweaked and tuned to the point that it's enjoyably tricky, but not impossible, to play past the first couple of levels.

85%

W*H*B

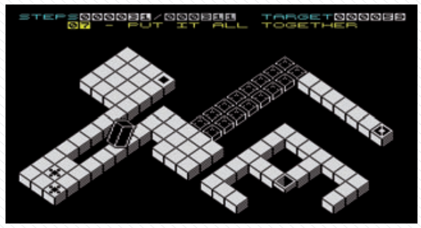
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

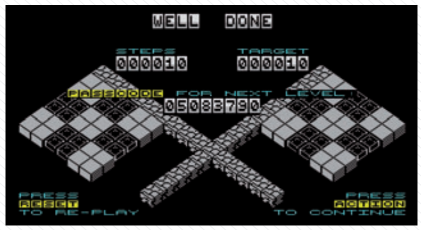
» **FORMAT:** 48K SINCLAIR SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** BOB SMITH
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.BOBS-STUFF.CO.UK » **PRICE:** FREE

Haven't you ever felt the urge to be a block? Not just playing *Tetris* but actually taking the role of the pieces? If so, Bob Smith's latest game should be of interest because the object of *W*H*B* (Width times Height times Breadth) is to roll a cuboid safely through isometric levels to their exits. Things start simple to introduce features like teleporters, splitters that break the cuboid in two, switches that toggle pathways, and fragile glass floors, but the puzzles soon become devious.

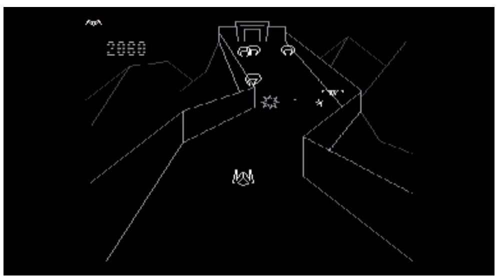
Thankfully there aren't any time limits, level codes allow players to skip in where they left off previously and, despite each puzzle having a target number of moves, the game doesn't insist they're met before moving to the next. Puzzling through each stage is a challenge that many gamers should enjoy, but more skilled players have the option of completing stages within their move limits as well.

89%





» [ZX Spectrum] Time to get out the flags.



» [C64] Bending bullets like Beckham.



FORTRESS OF NARZOD

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 64 » **DEVELOPER:** TRISTAR AND RED SECTOR INC.
» **DOWNLOAD:** NONAME.C64.ORG/CSDB/RELEASE/?ID=77706
» **PRICE:** FREE

Let's journey back to before recorded history, to a time where everybody had mystical powers. A war raged between these sorcerers during which the malicious mage Narzod scraped together the forces required to almost totally enslave humanity. One remaining free wizard has made it his mission to board a hovercraft – it really says that in the storyline – and storm the Fortress of Narzod to liberate the enslaved peoples within.

Despite all the wizards, sorcery and presumably magical hovercraft, this is an all-out blaster. The craft sits at the start of a road leading to the fortress gateway, and evil denizens rear their ugly heads from within in order to be blasted. The hovercraft's bullets bounce off the walls around the roadway and the fortress itself, so the knack lies in using ricochets to take out the nasties while avoiding destruction from both the enemy bullets and your own rebounding energy.

73%

CANNON WAR

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** 16K ZX81 » **DEVELOPER:** ANDRE BAUNE
» **DOWNLOAD:** ZX81.ORDI5.FREE.FR/ANDRE/ » **RELEASE DATE:** 2009 » **PRICE:** FREE

Cannon battles were regular occurrences during the First World War and *Cannon War* is programmer Andre Baune's attempt at recreating that action with a 16K ZX81. The player defends their base at the left of the screen from enemies on the right and, since the range of these cannons is around two thirds of that battlefield, each can either be in a defensive position where they can knock the enemy's cannonballs out of the air or forwards in an offensive one where they're close enough score hits on the enemy itself.

Unfortunately, *Cannon War* suffers rather badly from having been written in BASIC: the action is generally slow, the controls are sluggish to the point of annoyance, and everything freezes when the player's cannonball is in flight or the enemies temporarily advance to fire. It's good to see new ZX81 releases, but this one isn't particularly enjoyable as a game.

43%

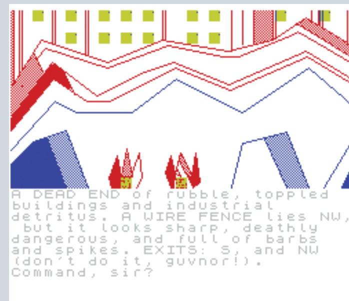


» [16K ZX81] If anybody can, cannon can!



WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [ZX Spectrum] Free and fun, so download it today.

» Watching The Sky

When author Andy Remic's novel *BioHell* was published in February he wondered what to do next and, after some thought, he decided to develop a game based on his own story of artificial intelligences, aliens and horrific zombie mutations… as a graphical text adventure for the Spectrum! The game was released at the beginning of May and is absolutely free and available to download from his website at: **www.andyremic.com**.



» [C64] This looks amazing, but will the gameplay impress?

» Black Knight

It seems that every issue we're bringing more news of Psytronik releases, and this one isn't an exception. Being developed by Mikael Tillander and Håkon Repstad, *Knight 'N' Grail* is a C64 platformer with over 200 screens and, if it plays as good as it currently looks, this could really be something special. More screenshots and a preview of the cover are at **psytronik.blogspot.com**.

» Fingers To The Bone

At the time of writing, the fourth PDROMS.de programming competition is running, and by the time this goes to print the entries, which will be announced when the competition closes, should be released. The target consoles ranged from the Atari 2600 to the Game Boy Advance, and the challenge this time around was to produce a puzzle game, so hopefully there will be some interesting entries released.

HOMEBREW

» The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

» Bobby Is Going Half-Life

Have you ever wondered what would happen if you mixed the Atari 2600 game *Bobby Is Going Home* with the world of *Half-Life*? Nope, neither have we. But if arbitrary pondering is your thing and the marriage of those two game worlds has found itself creeping into your thoughts, then, thanks to Andrew Kepple, you can finally find out by visiting **www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/495293**.

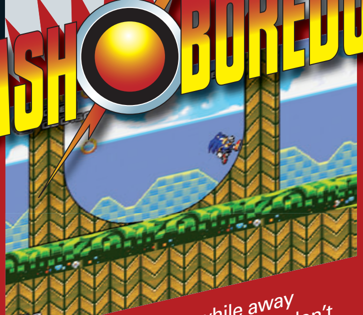


» [PC] In the game you get to play as face-snogging alien Lamarr. No, not the singer.

» Mega Race Returns

Sokurah (Tardis Remakes) has taken a break from his *Psycho Pigs UXB* remake, which we're really looking forward to, to rework the remake of his remake of the VIC20 classic *Omega Race*. Confused? You needn't be. And, we have to admit, having lost an entire afternoon to its addictive delights, it's absolutely bloody brilliant. Download it from the Tardis Remakes website, which is found here: **http://tardis.dk/wordpress/?page_id=181**

FLASH BOREDOM



Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on ***Retro Gamer's*** Flash game of the month. This month we look at ***Sonic The Hedgehog***

WITH VARIED AND lengthy levels and boasting a few hidden areas, great visuals, boss battles and even Sonic's handy dash spin, this is a great Flash homage to the Sega platform classic and a must for any hedgehog fan. Play it at: ***www.flashgames247.com***.

REMAKES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING...



PACOZYK

» **DOWNLOAD:** PACOZYX.WEBNODE.CZ/

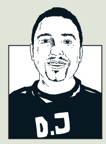


This remake of the arcade game *Zzyzzyxx* in still screens looks like a cross between *Boulder Dash* and *Pac-Man*, but it's neither really. To best describe the gameplay of *Zzyzzyxx* and *Pacozyk*, it's best to think of it as a claustrophobic take on *Frogger*. Your mission is to repeatedly work your way from the bottom to the top of the screen but with one slight point of difference: enemies move between gaps in the moving rows of bricks, and to finish a level you build a house at the top of the screen by collecting smaller bricks that randomly generated on the stage. With only three stages to complete, which loop but do increase in speed, the game is a little limited but is very enjoyable nonetheless.



INTERNATIONAL SOCCER

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.SENDSPACE.COM/FILE/ZUJUAK



After the many hours I've put into the excellent *FIFA 09*, I thought I would struggle to settle into this remake of Andrew Spencer's 1983 Commodore 64 classic, *International Soccer*. However, I'm pleased to report that wasn't the case at all. This is a very addictive little remake by Doc Frank-N, which – and I hope the author doesn't mind me saying this because I mean it in the nicest possible way – despite the obvious fact that your players aren't glued to a pole, at times feels more like virtual Foosball, which is a good thing in my book. The action just has this really frantic and random feel to it and the controls are simple, making it excellent fun when playing against a mate.

Remake of the Month

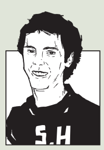




» [PC] Don't recognise the following level? Then hang your head in shame, you retro pretender, you.

WILLY MOUNTAIN PARTY

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.MENATO.NET/WILLYMPFIX/WILLYMOUNTAINPARTY.HTML



If you enjoyed Stuart Campbell's *Manic Miner: The Lost Levels* article back in issue 63, and worked your way through his guided tour but still find yourself pining for some more Miner Willy action, then you could do a lot worse than check out this enjoyable *Jet Set Willy* remake by Denny Menato.

With a little help from fellow programmer Scottige – who's started to appear in **RG** so often we're surprised he's not started charging – this enjoyable Flash title is a neat homage to the classic platformer and is definitely worth playing through. There's a great motif running through the game too: a neat mixture of old meets new with low and high-res sprites and a trippy-sounding song that some will come to love.

What we like most about the remake is the new room designs, which are both imaginative and, as in the creatively named 'Top of Big Tree' here, real head scratchers. Our only minor gripe with the game is that we occasionally found ourselves getting stuck and unable to escape, and jumping through stairs proved a little frustrating. On the whole, though, this is a thoroughly enjoyable remake, which once again proves that Matthew Smith's influence on UK gamers is second to none.









» **Above:** No fanzine cover is complete without an image of Miner Willy » **Left:** Rejoice, Spectrum lovers! *ZX Shed* is back very soon. » **Right:** A giant poster of Arnie. Who wouldn't want this?

HOMEBREW HEROES

IN A CHANGE OF PACE TO THE USUAL CODERS WE FEATURE, WE'VE GONE FOR SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT. SO MEET **LEE FOGARTY**, WHOSE POPULAR FANZINE ZX SHED WILL BE RE-LAUNCHING VERY, VERY SOON

Retro Gamer: Tell us how the original *ZX Shed* started.
Lee Fogarty: It all started in April 2005 when Colin Woodcock announced that *ZXF* 10 would be the last. It was suggested that a community project be started to fill the gap left by *ZXF*. With the working title of '*WoS Times*', many ideas were passed back and forth. Eventually, we had enough ideas to get started. With a bit of help from Martijn at World of Spectrum, we got ourselves a private forum and got the ball rolling!

RG: Where did the name *ZX Shed* originate?
LF: It was a standing joke on the forum at the time whenever there was a troll. Certain members would start talking about their sheds – this led to confusion for the trolls.

RG: Why choose the Spectrum over other 8-bit computers?
LF: Two reasons for this: firstly, the other 8-bit machines tend to have followers that can't read or write. It was a no-brainer for us. We wanted to keep the magazine small and we are all Spectrum fans. At around the same time, there was another magazine doing the rounds that covered all retro computers, so there would have been nothing new. I wonder what happened to that other magazine?

RG: What do you feel that the original version of *ZX Shed* offered over other fanzines?
LF: Apart from *ZXF*, at the time there wasn't really much else. Lots of online sites, but nothing you could print out and read. *ZXF* set a very high standard, and *ZX Shed* would never have taken off without it.

RG: Why did you decide to eventually step down as editor?
LF: It's been a very long time between issues. All of us have real lives to put up with, and with one delay after another we were losing the will to continue. What started off as a project to re-issue a fanzine for print turned into a laborious task and some valued members of the team standing down. Added to that, we lost our artist for some time, so I made the decision to wait until she had recovered before continuing. As a result, we now not only have our artist back, but she's taken over as editor!

RG: What has the support been like on sites like World of Spectrum?
LF: Support has been very good. We have welcomed criticism as well as support as we are all amateurs, so the criticism is probably more important to help us to improve.

Other sites have also been nice to us, which was a surprise – we have been talked about on Lemon 64, and in a nice way!

HIGH FIVE

Please tell us about your top five favourite new Spectrum games

1. **Egghead IV:** It was a three-year wait and well worth it! Thumping soundtrack and excellent gameplay! Plus I was a baddie, which is nice.
2. **Egghead V:** Again, I'm typecast as a baddie. The ultimate *Egghead* game. I'll be amazed if this is ever topped. 20 years ago this would have been full price.
3. **Stranded/Stranded 2.5:** Absolutely fantastic puzzlers! Horribly addictive too.
4. **Farmer Jack In Harvest Havoc:** This game didn't do too well in **RG**, but I beg to differ! A classic modified for the Spectrum to become a classic in its own right. Two sequels can't be wrong!
5. **Thieves School:** An immersive platform game. If more like this had been released in the Nineties, the Speccy might have lasted a bit longer…

The best compliment by far came from Elite Systems – they were supportive from the beginning.

RG: What can you tell us about the new version of *ZX Shed*?
LF: What new version? Who have you been talking to?

Okay, *ZX Shed* is being re-launched. Having Melissa Ward at the helm has proved to be a fantastic decision. The magazine looks amazing, and we have many members of the old team working together again.

Many of the features will remain, and the magazine has been designed from the start to be printable.

RG: Will the new *ZX Shed* have a dedicated website? What can we expect to find there?
LF: There has always been a website at **www.zxshed.co.uk**, but it was never used. This time around, it will be fully updated with reprints of the articles and reviews. In addition, any files that we are allowed to host will also be available. Being online, we have the ability to expand on reviews and interviews, and make the site more interactive.

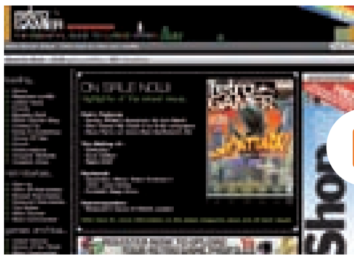
RG: Why do you think there remains so much interest in the Spectrum?
LF: We are all aware of the history by now thanks to **Retro Gamer**, and many of us – myself included – entered our industry thanks to learning to program a Spectrum. Nostalgia plays a huge part whichever machine we owned. I am absolutely certain that *ZX Shed* could just as easily have been *C64 Shed* or *CPC Shed* – it takes a bit of co-ordination to get issues out, but whichever machine is your favourite, there are people that can do things like this now.

BARGAIN HUNT

DESPERATE TO FINISH OFF YOUR RETRO COLLECTION? WANT TO GET YOUR HANDS ON ALL THE BEST BARGAINS BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO? THEN VISIT **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET/BARGAIN_HUNT.PHP** AND DISCOVER ALL THE CLASSIC MACHINES THAT YOU'LL EVER NEED

You've been asking for it forever, but we're pleased to announce a brand new look for **Retro Gamer**'s Buyer's Guide section that makes it incredibly easy to get your hands on all the best retro bargains.

Using our new search engine couldn't be easier, as all you need to do is select a manufacturer and machine from the pull-down menu. Once you've found the system you're after, the magic of the internet will search eBay for the top 20 ending items, meaning that you'll be able to gauge the market's health with very little effort. This month, Darran's getting in a bit of CPC action.



Head on over to the excellent **www.retrogamer.net** and click on 'Bargain Hunt' or visit **www.retrogamer.net/bargain_hunt.php**



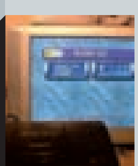
Put in the details for the greatest computer in the world and discuss with your staff writer why it's so much better than the ZX Spectrum.



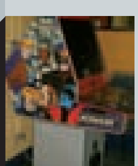
Swoon in delight as you find yourself getting ever closer to collecting all the £1.99 *Simulator* games that Codemasters ever released.

eBAY BARGAINS

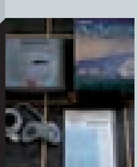
Retro Gamer has been scouring the world's most popular auction site to find the best bargains out there…



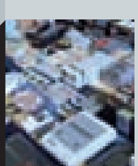
■ With a day left, this Panasonic 3DO probably wasn't going to stay at 99p for very long. A pretty fantastic deal if you can get it that cheaply.



■ At £50 and less than a day until the auction ended, we were very tempted by this good condition *X-Men* coin-op cabinet. A great deal.



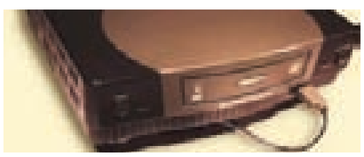
■ This Japanese Victor Saturn complete with ten decent games was going for a Buy It Now price of £159. Not a bad deal for a fairly uncommon model.



■ This impressive lot was going for £205 with hours remaining, although we doubt it actually went for so little in the end. We'd have bought it if it did.

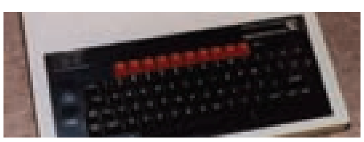
3DO

3DO GOLDSTAR	£45+ ($81+)
PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)	£40+ ($74+)
PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)	£20+ ($37+)



ACORN

ARCHIMEDES	£30 ($55)
ATOM	£50 ($92)
ELECTRON	£10 ($18)
BBC MICRO	£15 ($28)



AMSTRAD

CPC 464	£10+ ($18+)
CPC 664	£90+ ($165+)
CPC 6128	£25+ ($46+)
GX4000	£50+ ($92+)

APPLE

APPLE II	£30+ ($55+)

ATARI

400/800/600XL/XE	£20+ ($37+)
2600 (VCS)	£20+ ($37+)
5200	£30 ($55)
7800	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR CD	£70 ($129)
LYNX I/II	£20+ ($37+)
ST	£20+ ($37+)

BANDAI

GUNDAM RX-78	£75+ ($138+)
PLAYDIA	£90 ($166)
PIPPIN (ATMARK)	£500+ ($921+)
WONDERSWAN	£10 ($18)
WONDERSWAN COLOR	£20 ($37)
WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL	£25 ($46)



COMMODORE

AMIGA 500/600/1200	£20+ ($37+)
C16/PLUS/4	£15+ ($28+)
C64	£10+ ($18+)
C64 GS	£30+ ($55+)
C128	£30+ ($55+)
CDTV	£20 ($37)
CD32	£25 ($46)
VIC-20	£10+ ($18+)



FUJITSU

FUJITSU FM	£100+ ($184+)
FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY	£200+ ($368+)



MISCELLANEOUS

BALLY ASTROCADE	£20 ($37)
BARCODE BATTLER	£5 ($18)
CASIO LOOPY	£25 ($46)
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F	£10 ($18)
COLECOVISION	£30 ($55)
DRAGON 32/64	£8 ($15)
ARCADIA 2001	£10 ($18)
EPOCH CASSETTE VISION	£20 ($37)
EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION	£30 ($55)
INTELLIVISION	£40+ ($74+)
ODYSSEY	£10 ($18)
ORIC-1	£20 ($37)
PLAYSTATION	£10 ($18)
SAM COUPÉ	£50-£200 ($92-$368)
SUPERVISION	£15 ($28)
TIGER ELEC GAME.COM	£15 ($28)
TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)	£10 ($18)
VECTREX (MB/GCE)	£80 ($147)
X68000	£90+ ($166+)

MSX

MSX 1	£10+ ($18+)
MSX 2	£20+ ($37+)
MSX 2+	£30+ ($55+)
MSX TURBO R	£30+ ($55+)

NEC

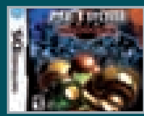
PC-6###	£10+ ($18+)

RETRO AUCTION WATCH

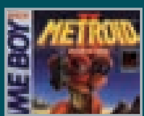
Retro Gamer sifts through the pages of eBay to report back on any items of interest, hardware or software, that caught our eyes. With two Metroid features, we had to see how much for the complete series.



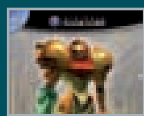
METROID
System: **NES**
Normally sells for **£12**
Ended at **£27**



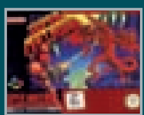
METROID PRIME: HUNTERS
System: **DS**
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£5**



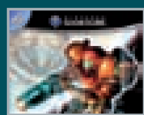
METROID II: RETURN OF SAMUS
System: **Game Boy**
Normally sells for **£8**
Ended at **£3**



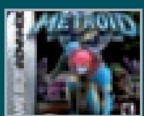
METROID PRIME
System: **GameCube**
Normally sells for **£6**
Ended at **£1.34**



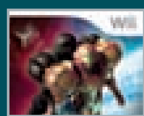
SUPER METROID
System: **SNES**
Normally sells for **£50**
Ended at **£35**



METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES
System: **GameCube**
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£4.98**



METROID FUSION
System: **GBA**
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£15**



METROID PRIME 3: CORRUPTION
System: **Wii**
Normally sells for **£25**
Ended at **£15**

PC-8801	£20 ($37)
PC-9801	£35 ($65)
PC-FX	£50 ($92)
PC-ENGINE	£55 ($101)
PC-ENGINE GT	£70+ ($129+)
TURBOGRAFX-16	£30 ($55)
TURBO EXPRESS	£50 ($92)
SUPERGRAFX	£80 ($147)
PC-E CD-ROM/ TURBOGRAFX CD	£50+ ($92+)
PC-E DUO/ TURBO DUO	£120 ($221)
DUO-R	£80 ($147)

NINTENDO

FAMICOM	£60 ($111)
FAMICOM AV	£40 ($74)
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM	£70 ($129)
SHARP FAMICOM TWIN	£100 ($184)
GAME & WATCH	£1+ ($2+)
GAME BOY B/W	£5 ($9)
GAME BOY POCKET	£8 ($15)
GAME BOY COLOR	£12 ($22)
GAME BOY ADVANCE	£25 ($46)
N64	£10 ($18)
N64 DD	£150+ ($276+)
NES (TOASTER)	£15 ($28)
NES (DOG BONE)	£50 ($92)
SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)	£20 ($37)
SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)	£50+ ($92+)
VIRTUAL BOY	£80 ($147)



PHILIPS

CD-I	£20+ ($37+)
CD-I 450/500	£30 ($55)
VIDEOPAC G7000	£10 ($18)
VIDEOPAC G7400	£20 ($37)

SEGA

32X	£35 ($65)
DREAMCAST	£25 ($46)
GAME GEAR	£15 ($28)
SG-1000	£50-£150 ($80-$260)
SC-3000	£50 ($92)
MASTER SYSTEM I/II	£10 ($18)



AMSTRAD MEGA PC	£10 ($18)
TERADRIVE	£100 ($184)
MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II	£25 ($46)
GENESIS 3	£35 ($65)
NOMAD	£100 ($184)
MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE	£100+ ($184+)
MEGA-CD (SCD) I/II	£50+ ($92+)
PICO	£20 ($37)
SATURN	£30 ($55)
MEGA CD (SCD) I/II	£50+ ($92+)

SINCLAIR

ZX80	£200 ($368)
ZX81	£70 ($129)
ZX SPECTRUM 48K	£10 ($18)
ZX SPECTRUM 128K	£40 ($74)
ZX SPECTRUM+	£35 ($65)
ZX SPECTRUM +2	£35 ($65)
ZX SPECTRUM +3	£40 ($74)

SNK

NEO-GEO AES	£150+ ($276+)
NEO-GEO MVS	£70 ($129)
NEO-GEO CD	£100 ($184)
NEO-GEO CDZ	£80+ ($147+)
NEO-GEO POCKET	£20 ($37)
NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR	£35 ($65)

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

MY NAME IS **CHRIS COX**, I'M 23 AND FROM CORNWALL. I HAVE BEEN COLLECTING GAMES AND CONSOLES FOR ABOUT TEN YEARS





» My favourite console of all time has to be the Dreamcast. It has so many excellent arcade conversions and was definitely ahead of its time. I've had one since the day of launch and I now have over 100 games for it.



» The Game Boy is one of my favourites – who doesn't love *Tetris* and *Mario Land*? I also have a Virtual Boy, which is good fun in short blasts. Got to avoid those headaches!



» Here is my Game & Watch collection. My rarest include the Crystal Screen *Mario* and *Climber*. I love them but they are becoming increasingly hard to come by.



» I also have over 100 GameCube games, including my personal favourites: *Wind Waker*, *Zelda: Four Swords Adventures*, *Chibi-Robo!*, *Pikmin*, *Mario Kart*, *Donkey Konga*, and the *Metroid Prime* games.



If you have a collection that you feel the rest of the **Retro Gamer** readership needs to know about, then contact us at **retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk** and we'll do our best to get you in the magazine.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

STAR LETTER

THE NINTH WONDER OF THE WORLD

Dear Retro Gamer,
Given the recent trend of **Retro Gamer** appearing in exotic locations, I thought you might like to see this photo of my issue of the magazine visiting the Pyramids of Giza.

You may also be interested to know that I have been doing my best to really recommend your magazine over at the NTSC-UK boards, where I am known as 'drmick'.

Retro Gamer magazine really is the best in the UK right now. There is simply so much content each month that it takes hours to read the entire mag, which explains why I tend to save them up for my holidays, as they never really go out of date.

Kindest regards, Michael McParland

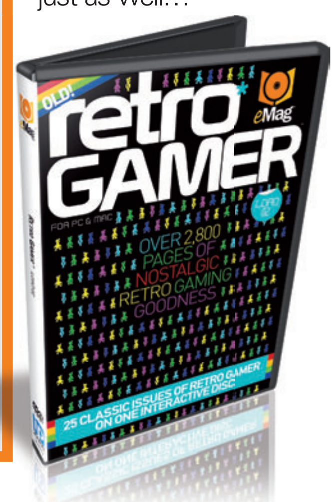
We're always pleased when our readers go that extra mile to spread the word of the Retro Gamer gospel, and we especially like it when they send us their funny photos. Michael, you can have a copy of eMag Load 2 as your reward, but only if you promise to take us on holiday with you next year.

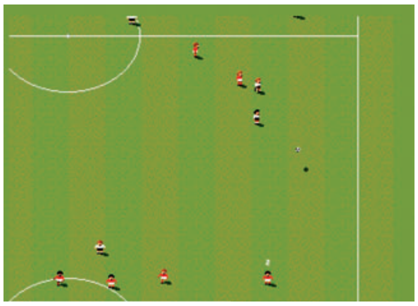


» Michael never goes anywhere without his latest bundle of retro goodness.

WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our brand new eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 2**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…





» [Amiga] If you're a fan of *Sensible Soccer* then be sure to visit Videogame Nation at the Urbis Exhibition Centre in Manchester.

URBIS THUMBS UP

Dear Retro Gamer,
I just wanted to tell you about the fantastic time I had today at the Videogame Nation event at Manchester's Urbis Centre. I spent a good few hours with my tolerant girlfriend blasting away on old favourites such as *Micro Machines* and *Operation Wolf*, but they weren't the highlight of my day. Not by a long shot.

I had waited patiently to play the winner of a *Sensible Soccer* contest that was taking place nearby and eventually got my chance. I came back from 3-1 down to win 4-3 and, boy, did it feel good. To make it that little bit sweeter it was actually against a Manchester United fan. They had just won the title a few days earlier, and it took all my restraint not to leap out of my replica stadium seat – a very nice touch by the way – brand him a loser and crassly yell "You're not singing any more" right in his face. I didn't of course, but we did make eye contact later on and I got a glimpse of his pain.

Some men like to settle their differences with pistols, while others are content to sort things out with fists clenched, but back in the Nineties, one football game separated the men from the boys, and the men from men with girlfriends. It was *Sensible Soccer* and it was bloody fantastic.

PS: My girlfriend wasn't watching my finest hour, but she did buy me a **Retro Gamer** subscription recently. It's possibly the most romantic thing anyone has ever done for me.

Mark Jackson, via email

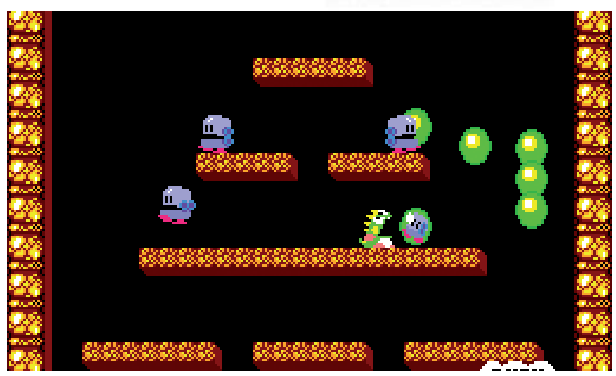
Really glad to hear that you enjoyed the Videogame Nation event, Mark, and special congratulations on your deserved victory as well. If you head on over to our main news story on page six you'll notice that it's all about Videogame Nation. Who knows, you might even see yourself in one of the pictures.

SHORT AND SWEET

Hi Darran,
Thanks for a great magazine, and your excellent blog and twitter page. I've just started subscribing to **Retro Gamer** and am really looking forward to each new issue. I'd love to know if there's an old issue of your magazine that covers *Bubble Bobble*, as I'm a massive fan of the arcade game.

Many thanks, Johan

The good news is that Retro Gamer has indeed featured articles about *Bubble Bobble* over the years (issues 8 and 28), the bad news is that both issues are currently out of stock at the Imagine



» [Arcade] While we won't be doing any big feature on *Bubble Bobble* any time soon, we may well do a Pixel Perfect.

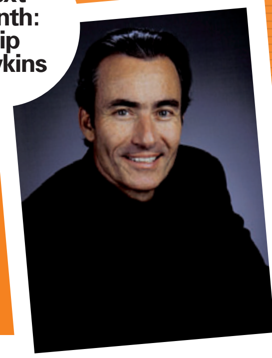


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Next Month: Trip Hawkins



BURNING QUESTION?

IF YOU HAVE a burning question, such as 'will David Braben will ever patch things up with Ian Bell', or 'does Matthew Smith check into hotels as Miner Willy', then you should head straight over to our forum to post your questions to our interviewees. The best of the bunch will be answered and revealed in the next issue. To find out who we're interviewing next, visit the Retro Gamer forum now at www.retrogamer.net/forum



[Amiga] Want to play *Flashback* on the CD32? Then get yourself an external floppy drive.

eShop. Our best advice to you is to keep your eyes peeled on eBay.

S.O.Z. SAVE OUR ZELDA

Dear Retro Gamer,
Recently, a friend of mine on YouTube (ocarina hero 10) made a brilliant *Zelda* timeline video called The Legend Of Zelda Split Timeline Theory **http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2g65jL3HDg**. It's the most accurate timeline video about the series to date. In fact, he received such positive feedback that he decided to send the video to Nintendo to determine if it was correct. However, their reply consisted of a pre-written letter telling him that there is no real timeline for the *Zelda* series and every Link is a different story.

This response could destroy the hopes of many *Zelda* timeline fans, so he's created a petition to encourage Nintendo to make an official timeline. So far we have 155 names, but we really want to persuade Nintendo. So I ask that all **Retro Gamer** and *Zelda* fans visit YouTube, search for 'Nintendo's response to split timeline theory' **http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5FozOuwQjl** and leave a comment asking ocarina hero 10 to put your name on the list. Let's save the *Zelda* timeline.
William Jones (no relation – Ed), Liverpool

Here's your printed letter, William. Good luck with your petition and let us know how it all works out.

> "My girlfriend bought me a Retro Gamer subscription. It's the most romantic thing ever"

NO MORE NINJA

Dear Retro Gamer,
Please, please, please. No more coverage of the *Last Ninja*. It was never that good in the first place and yet you seem to insist on covering it at every possible opportunity. Admittedly the interview with John Twiddy was otherwise a delightful read, but I'm sick to death of hearing about how amazing the C64 original was, when in reality it was average at best. Please stop any future coverage, as it's getting boring.
Yours faithfully, Stuart Taylor

Well, Stuart, you'll be pleased to hear that we don't have any current plans for more *Last Ninja* coverage in the near future. However, if the proposed PSP remake ever sees the light of day this may well change. For the time being, though, that's your lot.

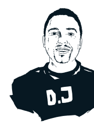
RETROBATE PROFILE



Name:	Declan
Joined:	19 July 2008
Location:	Ireland
Occupation:	Not given
Website:	Not given
Fave Games System:	Sega Saturn/Amiga
Bio:	Retro gaming enthusiast

BEAT THE TEAM

Think you're good at retro games? Then see if you can beat the staff at some of their favourite games



DARRAN

CHOSEN GAME: OPERATION WOLF
Why I picked it: I have something special planned for it next issue.
Handy advice: Use grenades to destroy as many vehicles as possible. It makes the difference.



High-Score: 221,900



STUART

CHOSEN GAME: DOUBLE DRAGON
Why I picked it: I was probably venting some pent up anger at the time. **Handy advice:** Try to use your fists and weapons as much as possible; it really is the best way to accurately floor adversaries.



High-Score: 10,450



DAVID

CHOSEN GAME: PAPERBOY
Why I picked it: Writing a look-back on Elite Systems made me realise I'd not played it for a while. **Handy advice:** On the CPC version, position your bike on edge of the pavement and you can pedal and never get knocked over. Cheat, moi?



High-Score: 123,250

From the forum

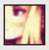
» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

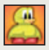
Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know...

What's your favourite Metroid game?


ID: woody.cool
The best *Metroid* game I have played is *Super Metroid* on the SNES. From the moment I set eyes on it, I absolutely loved it.


ID: Team Alfie
Unless we all just copy and paste woody.cool's quote, a better question might be: what's everyone's favourite *Metroid* game after *Super Metroid*? I would have to say *Metroid: Zero Mission* on Game Boy Advance. It's the perfect introduction to the series, but of course *Super Metroid* is godlike.


ID: harlequ1n
This is actually an extremely difficult question for *Metroid* fans like me to answer. I'll never forget the first time I played *Super Metroid* and drooled over the gorgeous graphics and incredible music. It was a profound improvement. However, I can say that this religious experience was cubed when I first played *Metroid Prime*. So I have to say *Metroid Prime* is, along with *Mario 64* and other old Nintendo mascots, the most enjoyable transition from 2D gameplay to 3D.


ID: nokgod
I had *Metroid Prime* on the GameCube and I must admit I didn't get on with it at all… scanning every-bloody-thing just got on my nerves. I've had much more fun with *Metroid Prime Pinball*, that's a cracking little game, so that gets my vote.

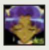

ID: zerocool
Metroid Prime on GameCube. They took the classic formula and revamped everything into one of the best first-person shooter games I've ever played.


ID: lexiomiguel
Super Metroid because *Metroid* feels hindered technologically and the *Metroid Primes* just leave you consistently wondering what to do next.

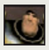

ID: SexyWayne
It's *Metroid Fusion* for me, in fact I think the cart is in my Game Boy Advance right now. *Goes to check.* Yep it's still in there, and has been for the last three or four months. I get a little bit further every time I need a poo.


ID: pforson
To all you non-believers, go and play *Metroid: Zero Mission* on GBA. I promise you will not be disappointed. Until recently I was of the same opinion – thinking that *Metroid* was not exactly my cup of tea and placing it firmly in the 'Nintendo fanboy/can't be bothered' part of my brain. How wrong I was. It's engrossing and feels like a space epic on a very small screen – I was playing on a Micro. It is dripping with atmospherics and the controls and game mechanics are tight and well considered.


ID: The Master
I think my answer has to be *Gorf*.

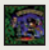

ID: RetroKingSalmon
I played *Metroid Prime* briefly, but I didn't get very far. I did, however, spend many long hours trying to finish *Super Metroid*… I never quite managed that either. I keep meaning to start the game from scratch again. I always wanted to play the *Super Metroid*-like Game Boy titles. And I know I will one day, but for now my favourite game in the series is *Super Metroid*.


ID: Mire Mare
It has to be *Metroid Prime 3: Corruption* for me. I love the way it melded all the quintessential *Metroid* elements from the 2D games, *Prime* and *Echoes*, and then took it all one step further with motion controls. It's as close to feeling Samus as you can be. Sorry, I meant to say, it's as close to feeling like you're right there in Samus's boots as you can be.


ID: Cafeman
I have only ever played *Metroid Prime 1* and *2*. But I would choose number *1*.


ID: TheShend
I was going to throw in my love for *Prime*, but it's getting enough love already. I'll plump for Zero *Mission* on Game Boy Advance It's a really nice, tight little game of the original NES *Metroid*. The section towards the end where roles are reversed is a wonderful mechanism for turning the run-and-gun massacre into a joyous stealth-paced platformer. Such a brave shift.

A big mention must also go to the levels that turn into puzzles when obtaining later energy/missile tanks where you have to use some very nifty and dextrous use of the dash boost to get them. An addictive package.


ID: MediaCult
Actually, I have only ever played the Game Boy version, *Metroid II*, but it rocked. The music was avant garde and moody. The schwoop effect when aliens died, and the Giger-esque bosses all made such an impression on me.

YOUR OPINION PLEASE

ARMALYTE REMAKE

markopoloman Well, Smila and co have done a fantastic job on the other games they remade. It's a bit strange to see them release one for money, though. They always loved to slap the 'Warning' message at the beginning of their games saying that if you purchased the game, you have been done as it's free. But, if that's the direction they are going now, then good luck to them.

JetSetWilly Looks excellent. I just hope it runs on my laptop.

Havantgottaclue Smila's *Wizball* conversion was fantastic so it's hard to imagine that this isn't going to be worth buying. Looking forward to it. Oh, and kudos to Dan Phillips and Andy Roberts for their gesture in permitting the venture. It's great to see developers being selfless with their IP.

thevulture I want this. Fingers crossed the pre-order is available soon. Is this the first of many such conversions? I can only hope so.

GORY GAMES

Xyphoe I recently came across a game on the Amstrad and Commodore 64 called *Infernal Runner* – a very old (French made) game from 1985 – and was surprised by all the nasty booby traps and ways to die. Not to mention the very gory way it is animated. Are there any other games that you lot can think of that were similarly gory back in the day? Seems quite rare and unusual for the time period.

yakmag The original *Forbidden Forest* on the 64: impaled by skeletons, dissolved by acid-spitting snakes, squashed by frogs, burned alive by dragons. Decapitation in *Barbarian*?

zerocool *Renegade* on the Amstrad featured blood pouring out of the back of your head.

Antiriad Isn't that just a natural reaction to playing an Amstrad? It's certainly preferable…

Seadog74 *Smash TV*. If you step on a mine, parts of your body come flying towards you.

SEGA RALLY

RetroKingSalmon I recently bought *Sega Rally* for PSP for £6. My first impressions are mixed, to be honest, and I prefer *Sega Rally 2* on Dreamcast. I also wonder what everyone's favourite game in the series is, and would you like to see more games released bearing the *Sega Rally* name?

Megamixer I'd have to say the original is the best. I've played that and *Sega Rally 2* in the arcades, and the sequel just wasn't the same. I can't put my finger on why, though…

thl I have to settle with the original, which I usually play on the Saturn.

Space_Turnip Saturn *Sega Rally* is near racing perfection. It's had more play in my Saturn than any other game. I thought *Sega Rally 2* was a bit of a disappointment to be honest, but then that's maybe because the DC has so many great racers.

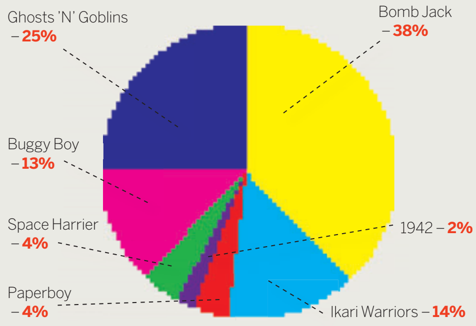
Old vs NEW

Each month, we'll be finding out if the classics are better than their successors. This month, which *Space Invaders* is your favourite?

Space Invaders	Space Invaders Extreme
	
35%	65%
paranoid marvin "It is a unique and unforgettable experience"	**CraigGrannell** "The best classic game remake I've played"

HOT TOPIC

What's your favourite conversion by Elite?



"When I first saw this thread's title, I thought I'd vote for the NES version, but then realised that you didn't mean the best version of Bell and Braben's *Elite*…"
– ipmarks

"*Bomb Jack* was my favourite Amstrad 464 game. The gameplay and the colourful backgrounds ticked all the right boxes for me."
– Timothy Lumsden

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CONRAD CONCERNS

Dear Retro Gamer,
I love your magazine and never miss an issue. In fact it's pretty much the only gaming magazine I still buy. Being from the US, I don't know much about the Amiga range of computers, so was hoping you could help me. I recently came across a copy of *Flashback* for the Amiga and was wondering if there was any way to play it – it's a disk version of the game – on the Amiga CD32 console? If I can indeed play it, which device would I need?
Many thanks, Ross Jaeger

Well Ross, we've spoken to resident Amiga expert Ashley Day and he says that any Amiga external disk drive will allow you to play your desired game. It plugs into the back of the machine so all you need to do is track down the required hardware.

CRASH SMASH

Dear Retro Gamer,
I'd just like to say that I love the new section at the beginning of the magazine. I've always been impressed by the interaction of **Retro Gamer** and its readership, as it harkens back to the good old days of *Crash* and *Zzap!* With so many similar gaming magazines on the shelves, it's refreshing to read one that takes its readership seriously. Keep up the great work.
James White, Birmingham

Thanks for the kind words, James. We do take our readership seriously, so it made perfect sense to include them in the magazine as much as possible. Oh, and wait until you see the new forum feature that's in the current issue. You're going to absolutely love it.

EUGENE WOE

Dear Retro Gamer,
I love your magazine, but why on earth do you have Eugene Jarvis in every sodding issue of the magazine? Yes he's made some great games in the past (and I stress 'the past'), and judging by his comments in your new feature, which I admittedly enjoyed, he's a funny guy, but surely you could interview someone else for a change?

No doubt when the next issue comes back there'll be a new Q&A with Jon "I've never been in **Retro Gamer** before" Ritman or Jon "Hi, I did *Sensible Soccer*" Hare… In case you can't tell, I'm being sarcastic, as Homer Simpson would say.
Yours not impressed, Paul Baker, via email

The last time we featured Eugene Jarvis in the magazine was issue 60, so he doesn't appear in 'every' issue. Another thing to bear in mind, is that many great games were often produced by the same developers, so if we do a company profile on *Sensible* Soccer, *Wizball, Cannon Fodder* or *Sensible Software* it's inevitable that at some point we'll end up having a chinwag with John Hare. Still, we can understand where you're coming from, and will of course continue to try and put new faces into the magazine.



» **Darran's bought himself a Nomad. He now thinks it's the best thing since *Strider*.**

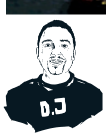
DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Sega's Nomad
Darran, in one of his unpredictable flights of fancy, has now decided that the Sega Nomad is the best handheld ever made and has been buying as many classics Mega Drive games as he can get his hands on. Stuart is simply biding his time as he's convinced that Darran will soon get bored of it and will sell it to him for a pretty penny. Steve just wants a DSi and can't see what all the fuss is about.

> "I've always been impressed by the interaction of Retro Gamer and its readership"

CURRENTLY PLAYING



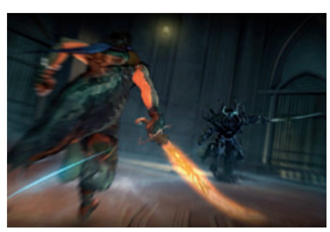


DARRAN
Ridge Racer
I recently started playing with my PSP again. I'd forgotten how good *Ridge Racer* is. Fast, slick and polished, it's my second favourite racer on the system after *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast*. And no, I've not played *Initial D* yet.





STUART
The Orange Box
This has been sitting in my games collection for a while now, but I finally decided that this is the month to work through it. And I'm so glad I did. If you've never played *Half-Life 2* you're missing out on something very special.





DAVID
Prince Of Persia: Epilogue
As a fan of Jordan Mechner's *Prince Of Persia*, I've played every *POP* game – including the pointless *Epilogue* of the latest release. The underground palace is removed from the splendid outdoor setting, but it's still great fun.

retro GAMER

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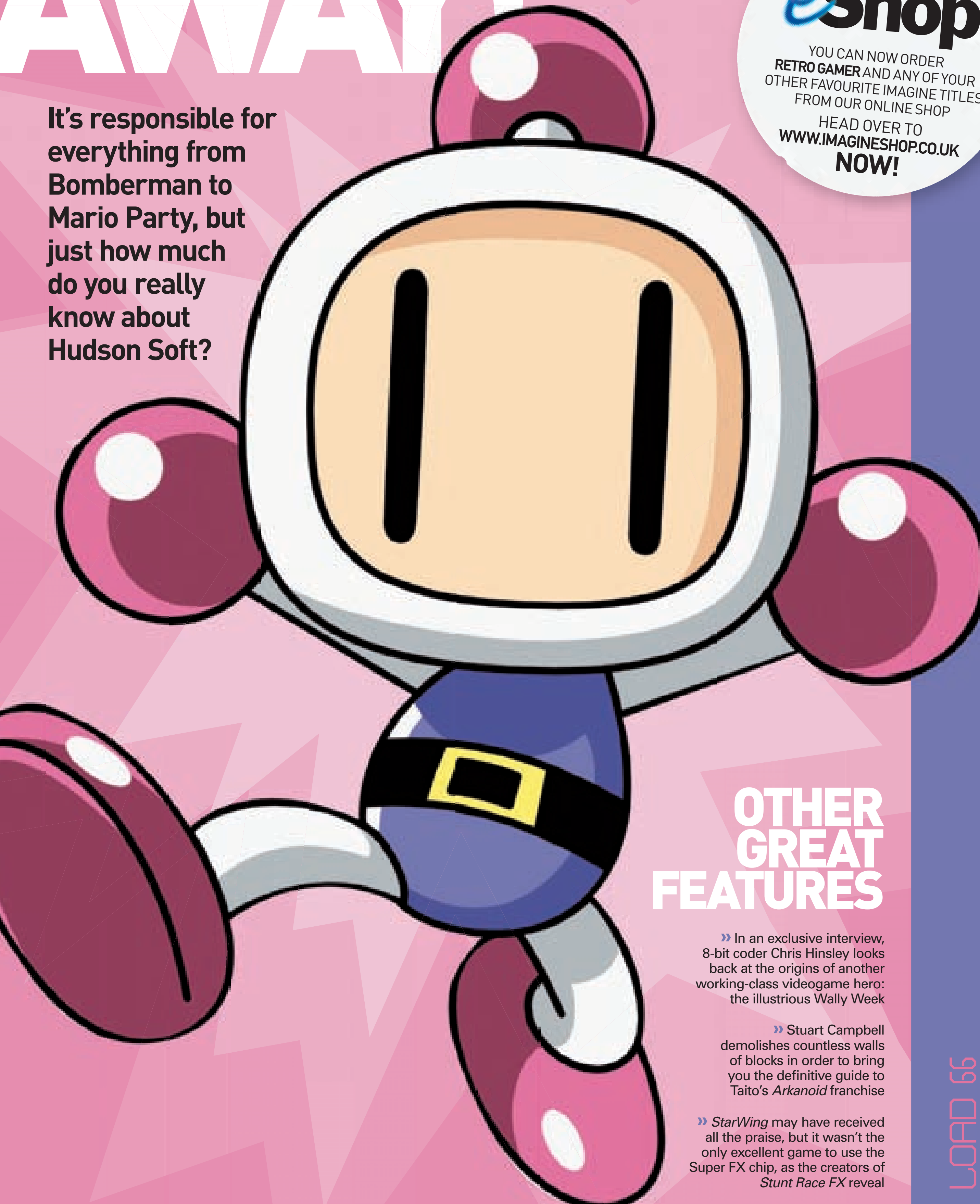
NEXT ISSUE

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BOMBS AWAY!

It's responsible for everything from Bomberman to Mario Party, but just how much do you really know about Hudson Soft?

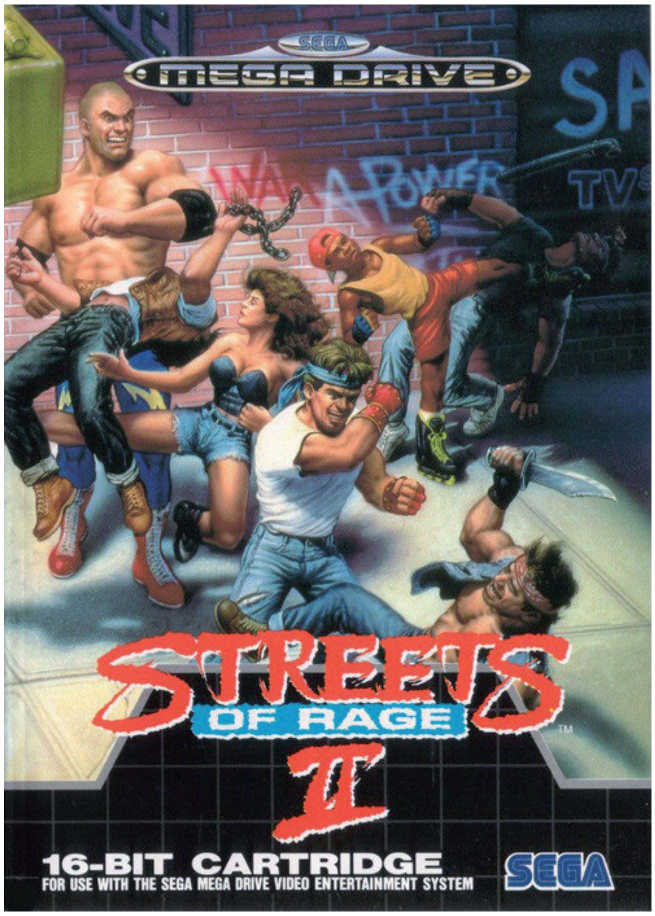


OTHER GREAT FEATURES

» In an exclusive interview, 8-bit coder Chris Hinsley looks back at the origins of another working-class videogame hero: the illustrious Wally Week

» Stuart Campbell demolishes countless walls of blocks in order to bring you the definitive guide to Taito's *Arkanoid* franchise

» *StarWing* may have received all the praise, but it wasn't the only excellent game to use the Super FX chip, as the creators of *Stunt Race FX* reveal

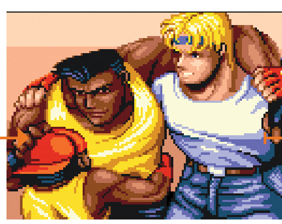


STREETS OF RAGE II

There's just one finish to this fantastic side-scrolling brawler. You press Start 100 times, you fight people called Guitar 100 times, and you finish the game with the same ending 100 times. Anyway, that's enough stalling, here's this month's End/Game











SCREEN 1
Having kicked Mr X and his karate whipping boy to a bloody and bruised mess, our four gallant heroes stand proudly over their end-game guardian with faces of disgust. "Shame on you, man. Shame on you," they'll scream.

SCREEN 2
That's when our heroes claim their prize: Adam, who's been held captive inside a dark room for 27 weeks. Only when Axel opens the door do we make the startling discovery that the walls in the room are in fact orange.

SCREEN 3
In the most touching moment in any *Streets Of Rage* game, here we see Axel cuddling Adam while Skate goes in for a tender embrace with his dear pops. Damn, this game is an emotional rollercoaster sometimes.

SCREEN 4
Then we watch as our heroes witness what appears to be some kind of army testing going on up the road, or maybe it's just the opposite of a solar eclipse, whatever that is. A lunar eclipse is it? No, scrap that, that's not right.

SCREEN 5
With the mission over, the team stand and stare at the bright sun, which is obviously a pretty irresponsible thing to do. Thankfully, the chopper turns up before any permanent retina damage is done. The end.